A PROCESSUAL ANALYSIS OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This thesis presents a discourse analysis of the role of human resource management (HRM) in organisational change. It is based on research in two manufacturing organisations, each located in Central Scotland. The thesis begins by outlining the epistemological problems associated with normative prescriptions of HRM, and explains that current research is dominated by surveying the extent of particular "bundles" of HRM practices, what variables affect their development and their impact upon organisational performance. The assumption underlying functionalist investigations of this kind is that social reality can be conceived as an objective reality, and that language is something that simply mirrors or communicates this reality. The thesis moves on to challenge such assumptions and argues that an overemphasis on the functionalist paradigm provides too restrictive a view of organisational change and HRM. Attention is drawn to the artificial dichotomy made between "hard" and "soft" HRM that dominates mainstream research and arguments developed for the need to expand inquiry into an alternate conceptualisation based upon a social constructionist view. This allows for a more critical evaluation of the language and practice of HRM at a time when a growing number of companies are introducing new employment practices in the guise of "culture change" or "HRM".

The contribution of this research is both theoretical and empirical. At a theoretical level it presents a conceptual framework that offers an alternative way of viewing the facticity of HRM than that typically portrayed in traditional HRM texts. At an empirical level the thesis provides rich descriptions of the processes by which HRM practices are discursively produced and reproduced within two establishments moving toward flatter team based structures within their manufacturing operations. Focus of the research is placed upon the dynamic nature of HRM and its role in processes of organisational change. HRM is understood as both a process and outcome of social construction activities, produced and reproduced through the interplay of workplace "conversations" and the organisational context. "Conversation" in this sense is used as a metaphor to highlight the collaborative and discursive processes by which individuals construct their knowledge and understanding of their organisational world, and includes verbal, visual, written interactions and social practices. The theoretical framework grounded in the case study material, presents a hierarchy of "conversations" (at strategic, managerial and operational levels of managerial activity) within which change occurs and HRM is enacted.

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1 Chapter One : Introduction to Thesis

1.1 Research position

This thesis aims to develop understanding of the processes by which human resource management (HRM) practices emerge and develop, and their role in organisational change. This is done by adopting a discourse-analytic perspective that is more sensitive than conventional research techniques at exploring the dynamics of HRM-based change.

Current literature provides a range of prescriptions dominated by a practitioner oriented view of organisations and research tradition concerned with testing models of strategic change that assume a tight coupling between policy and practice (Truss and Gratton 1994, Boxall 1992). Less often considered, are the actual implementation of HR practices, and the significance of HRM language in the structuring of meaning, influencing how organisational participants think about and interpret organisational "reality". Despite the increasing amount of research in this field, there remains a gap in the literature of a processual understanding of the dynamics of HRM-based change over time. While longitudinal research provided by writers such as Pettigrew (1985), Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) and Doz and Prahalad (1988) provide critical insights into the emergent nature of strategic change, an understanding of the role of HRM in processes of transformational change remains incomplete.

Analysts commonly refer to Burrell and Morgan's (1979) conceptual framework as a starting point in their discussion about the appropriateness of recipe driven approaches to HRM-based change. This identifies four paradigms about the nature of organisations, built on two dimensions; subjective-objective and regulation-radical[1]. These include Interpretive, Functionalist, Radical humanist, and Radical Structuralist paradigms (a summary is presented in appendix one). Burrell and Morgan treat these paradigms as being mutually exclusive because they are grounded in fundamentally different

[1] The former refers to whether or not "reality" is of an objective nature, external to the individual, or of a subjective nature and the product of individual and social consciousness. The second dimension builds upon the conflict-order debate articulated by Dahrendorf (1959). It refers to the sociology of regulation unity and cohesiveness in human affairs) and the sociology of radical change (deep-seated structural conflict and modes of domination) (Burrel and Morgan 1979: 17).

assumptions and approaches to the building of theory. Their view has come under increasing attack in the wake of "postmodernism" in which the constitutive powers of language are emphasised (Alvesson and Deetz 1999: 199), and arguments made for the development of multi-paradigmatic approaches to theory building in the study of HRM-based change (Kamoche 1995a, 1998, Watson 1994, Willmott 1993, Alvesson 1994).

This present study develops a multi-paradigmatic and multidisciplinary approach to the analysis of HRM-based change, recognising that " The use of any single research paradigm provides too narrow a view to reflect the multi-faceted nature of organisational reality" (Gioia and Pitre 1990: 584). It draws upon interpretive, functionalist and radical humanist perspectives, and builds upon socio-political analyses of organisational behaviour drawn from literature in the (overlapping) fields of HRM, organisational change, sociology, power and politics and organisational strategy.

1.2 Scope of research

The thesis focuses on the nature of HRM and the role that the language and practices of HRM play in strategic change at the level of the firm. The term strategic in this sense refers to the magnitude of change (Pettigrew 1985) and shall be defined as radical or transformational change that is perceived by change agents as being a strategic imperative. Strategy as Mintzberg has shown, can be "emergent" as well as be "intended" and contains a blend of cognitive, political and cultural processes (1978). This research shall view strategy from this perspective while recognising that there are numerous different schools of thought on the strategy process that tend to be presented as being mutually exclusive (Johnson and Scholes 1999). Transformational change in this context refers to a major shift in organisational ideology centred round the reformulation of management control, and which is at the heart of the HRM agenda (Willmott 1993, Alvesson 1994, Townley 1994, and Kamoche 1998).

The research examines processes of change in two large manufacturing organisations that involved the introduction during the mid-late 1990s of an HRM-centred approach to the management of shopfloor workers. Research objectives are as follows:

1. Explore management processes concerned with the emergence and deployment of HRM as part of the planned change effort, in particular how and why certain interpretations and configurations of HRM activities emerge and alter over time.

2. Examine the nature and scope of change and its associated phases.

3. Examine the constant movement of meaning as managers endeavour to effect strategic change, and the dialectical relationship between this dynamic and the organisational context.

The two organisations, located in Scotland, were subsidiaries of well known multinational corporations that at the time of research were at the forefront of innovative HRM practices being introduced as part of wider strategic change programmes. Fieldwork within each of the case organisations was conducted over a period of eighteen consecutive months [2], and I as the researcher, was presented as a lecturer from Napier University who wished to learn more about the introduction of new employment practices on a brownfield site. My prime role was that of researcher/interviewer, gatherer of the interpretations of people most knowledgeable about processes of managing the change initiative. To a lesser extent I also assumed the role of participant observer. Neither my background experience as a personnel manager nor the status of the research as part of a Ph.D thesis was highlighted as it was believed that this might inhibit frank discussion with respondents interviewed.

Judgements about when to start and finish fieldwork were made pragmatically in light of research questions posed, time constraints and the researcher-subject relationship in the organisations. Access to each company was gained through my initial contact with a human resource manager with whom I had professional contacts. These people provided the initial introductions to line managers responsible for managing change, provided continual support as field work progressed, and became effective sources for developing further lines of enquiry.

Other "gatekeepers" were project managers responsible for setting up task forces and monitoring change processes. As I got to know them on a personal level I was invited to join them and their colleagues for coffee/lunches, providing an important insight into their "natural world", and links to different levels of management as well as workers on

[2] It is explained in chapter three that fieldwork captured retrospective as well as real time data covering periods of up to five years within each of the cases.

the shopfloor. It was beyond the scope of the research to make a close study of the change initiatives on shopfloor employees. Rather, the research was designed to provide a rich description of the perceptions of managers at different levels and functions about the change process and their efforts to manage it. Nevertheless a small number of focus group interviews held on the shopfloor provided a rich source of information on the perceptions of and feelings of production workers' at the receiving end of change.

1.3 Overview of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters:

1. Introduction to thesis
2. Literature review
3. Research design, methodology and introduction to each case
4. Individual case study analysis (Ethicon)
5. Individual case study analysis (BP)
6. Presentation of a processual orientation of HRM-based change grounded in a cross-case analysis and discussion of the key contribution of the thesis to current debate about the role and nature of HRM in organisational change.

The literature review contained in chapter two is divided into two parts. The first provides an evaluation of theories of HRM-based change dominated by the functionalist paradigm. From this perspective culture is seen to be an external objective "reality", treated as a variable that is open to manipulation and control, and links are drawn between innovative HRM practices (that act as new forms of culture control) and improved organisational performance. The limitations of this approach are identified and the need emphasised for alternative approaches to the study of HRM that take more account than conventional techniques, of the complex social, political and cultural dimensions of organisational change.

Part two develops the analytical framework underpinning the research design explained in chapter three. It provides a critical analysis of cultural and political perspectives on change, with particular attention paid to the discursive nature of organisation and management, and the dynamics of HRM-based change. It is explained that more needs

to be understood about the constitutive nature of HRM, especially its role in shaping organisational discourse and collective meanings at the workplace.

Chapter three is divided into three sections. The first two provide an explanation for the methods used, and details of the research process itself. It is explained that the two case studies were designed to allow change processes to reveal themselves in a "contextual manner" (Pettigrew 1995: 94), which meant drawing attention to historical as well as contemporary issues through the use of a discourse analysis of interviews and company literature. It is explained that the application of a discourse-analytic approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the socially complex nature of human resource management and the processes by which HRM-based change emerge. The final section introduces each of the two case studies, outlining key differences and similarities of context within which the language and practice of HRM emerged.

Chapters four and five contain the two case histories, Ethicon Ltd and BP Chemicals respectively. Each case is structured round three broad phases of change within which HRM was constructed and reconstructed as part of planned change programmes which centred on movement towards teamworking arrangements and new methods of manufacturing:

> Evolution: emergence of a new discourse that signifies a highly unitarist and more optimistic approach to the management of employment relations.
>
> Transformation: new discourse developed as meanings multiplied and tensions between old and new texts increased, alongside movement to foreclose meaning.
>
> Incorporation: elements of the new discourse became incorporated into workplace routines thus becoming part of the natural language of the organisation.

Chapter six presents a processual framework of HRM-based change grounded in a cross-case analysis. Attention is drawn the constant movement of meaning as HRM text emerges and both shapes and is shaped by ongoing discursive changes at local level and wider social structures external to the firm. The chapter draws the thesis to a close by reiterating the key contribution of the thesis to current debate about the role and nature of HRM in organisational change.

2 Chapter Two: Organisational change and the role of HRM

This chapter divides into two parts. Part one examines theoretical underpinnings of normative models of HRM inspired by notions of culture and culture change, and advanced by studies that purport a clear link between distinctive "bundles" of HRM practices and employee/company performance (Guest, 1997; Guest, 1999b). Part two examines more qualitative-oriented conceptions of the organisation and HRM. It draws on discourse theory to develop the conceptual framework upon which the analysis of change within the two case studies is based.

Part 1: Theoretical Underpinnings of HRM

2.1 Normative approaches to HRM

While there is no one conceptual framework of HRM, one key distinguishing feature of normative views, is the emphasis placed on a "strategic" or "hard" approach to managing human resources (Storey and Sisson, 1993; Legge, 1995a,b). The role of HRM in the management of strategic change is regarded as one of acting as an integrating mechanism, with focus given to a close "fit" between business and HR strategies similar to contingency models of HRM (Baird and Meshuolam, 1988; Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Fombrum et al, 1994). A rational-linear view of strategic decision making is taken that implies a level of certainty that managers are able to "read" the environment and develop and implement business /HR strategies in a more or less step by step fashion (Sisson, 1994; Armstrong and Long, 1994; Whittington, 1995). This "hard" version of HRM is informed by views of human nature contained in McGregor's Theory X, based on notions of rational-economic (wo)man and the need for tight managerial control (McGregor, 1960). Line management is placed in a pivotal role in the delivery of HRM practices, and the need commonly emphasised for a realignment of personnel and line relationships (Legge, 1989; Guest, 1987; Storey, 1992; Cunningham and Hyman, 1999; Lowe, 1992).

Normative approaches also give primacy to the development of employee commitment and the fostering of a unified organisational culture (Guest 1987, 1989; Storey 1992). This "soft" dimension of HRM (Storey 1992) is based on views of human nature

contained in McGregor's Theory Y, that "man will exercise self direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which he is committed" (McGregor, 1960: 3, cited by Truss et al, 1997: 55). It resonates with discussions of culture management and change that were heavily marketed by consultants during the 1980s and much influenced by management "gurus" who became identified with the excellence school of thought (for example Peters 1978, Peters and Waterman 1982, Deal and Kennedy 1982, Kanter 1983, 1989).

Storey's model of HRM (appendix two) provides an influential framework that incorporates the "hard" and "soft" conceptions noted above (Storey 1992, 1995). Borrowed from the Harvard and Michigan business schools (Fombrum et al, 1984; Beer et al, 1984), HRM is described as an idealisation "which expresses the aspirations of British managers" and that rests on the premise that managing human resources is of "strategic" importance (Storey, 1995: 34). Focus is placed on a core set of beliefs and assumptions that give primacy to notions of self-control, an open management style, flatter team-based structures, and employee empowerment. A complementary group of "key levers" (recruitment, selection, training and so on) are presented as key personnel practices that can be applied to support the transition (culture change) from personnel to HRM practice. On the one hand these key levers are shown to be internally integrated with each other, and on the other, externally integrated with the business strategy.

The mix of "levers" described by Storey are presented as a menu of human resource practices available to change leaders, although his case study evidence does not make clear how or why new HR levers were used in conjunction with each other, nor how they altered through time. As Kessler observes (Kessler, 1993) further explanation is required of the nature of and reasons for differences in HRM practice between cases.

Similar problems arise with recent research designs concerned with examining the impact of more explicitly integrated mixes of HRM practices or "bundles" [3]of HRM practice, upon HRM outcomes and/or organisational performance (Dyer and Reeves, 1995). These are commonly referred to as "high commitment practices", (Wood and de

Menzies, 1998; Wood and Albanese, 1995; Guest, 1997; Walton, 1985) or "high performance work practices" (Huselid, 1995; Pfeffer, 1994, 1998). Taxonomies are generally clustered in line with Walton's (1985) dichotomy between control and commitment cultures, and used to assess the performance effects of certain configurations of HRM (Huselid, 1995; MacDuffie, 1995; Arthur, 1994; Ichniowski al, 1993 ; Patterson et al, 1997; Guest and Hoque, 1994; Guest, 1997; Hoque, 1999; Wood and de Menzies, 1998).

An example of a bundle of high commitment practices used to assess the impact of HRM upon labour productivity and quality and HR outcomes, is given in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: HRM Practices within Greenfield sites (Guest and Hoque, 1994)

- Harmonised terms and conditions
- Single Status
- Internal promotion the norm
- No compulsory redundancy
- Trainability as a major selection criterion
- Use of psychology tests for all selection
- Realistic job previews during recruitment
- System to communicate values to new staff
- Deliberate development of a learning organisation
- Min. annual training requirements for all
- Flexible job decisions not fixed to one task
- Jobs designed to make full use of skills
- Teamworking for majority of staff
- Staff involved in setting performance targets
- Staff responsible for their own quality
- Majority involved in QC's or QI teams
- Regular use of attitude surveys
- Team briefing/ information cascades
- Information on market position/ company performance
- Merit pay for all staff
- Formal appraisal for all at least annually
- HR policy integrated with business strategy
- HR policies integrated with each other.

Assumptions underpinning normative views of HRM-based change

While definitions and taxonomies of high commitment practices vary, two key beliefs and assumptions underpin all normative prescriptions. Both are based on the premise

[3] HRM practices are "bundled" when they occur in fairly complete, mutually reinforcing or synergistic sets (Dyer and Reeves, 1995: 657).

that the external environment is made up of objectively determined situational variables. These are treated as "givens " (that are more or less unpredictable) by strategists, and organisational performance is seen to be a function of the fit between an organization's internal arrangements and environmental characteristics.

The first assumption underpinning the normative view is that organisational culture can be treated as a variable (something an organisation has), that can be manipulated in order to contribute to the systemic balance and effectiveness of the organisation. Consistent with the integrationist approach identified by Meyerson and Martin (1987), culture is seen as unitary and the "collective consensus of the organisation" (Legge, 1995b: 186), manifested by symbolic devices. These include stories (Salzer-Morling, 1998) and "rites of passage" (Trice and Beyer, 1985), for example procedures for recruitment, selection and training, that can be manipulated by senior management in order to build organisational commitment.

Linked with the above, a second assumption is that the creation of "high commitment" cultures have universal relevance to the modern organisation, and is treated as being comparatively more vital than other more traditional sources of competitive advantage (for example Walton, 1985, 1987; Storey, 1995; Pfeffer, 1994; Guest, 1987, 1995, Lawler, 1986). Despite significant criticism of the excellence approach (Carroll, 1983; Guest, 1992), normative prescriptions continue to exert a considerable influence on management thinking at a time when firms are facing increasing global competition, falling market shares and both politicians and employers seek to find new solutions for the future (Guest, 1990, 1992; Storey, 1992; Mabey et al., 1998c). This rationale is explained by Wood and Albanese; "All organisations, perhaps including public service ones, are confronting increasingly higher levels of uncertainty and intensified demand for quality products, and it is this "constancy of change" which demands more flexible, innovative workforces in all areas of the economy" (1995: 217).

Based upon the above argument, recent HRM research suggests that particular bundles of HRM practices are more important in creating consensus and enhancing employee commitment and labour productivity than any single HR initiative (Dyer and Reeves,

1995; Guest and Hoque, 1994; Guest, 1997; Pfeffer, 1994, 1998: Wood and de Menzies, 1998; Hoque 1999). [4]

Guest's recent work (Guest and Peccei, 1994; Guest and Hoque, 1993, 1994; Guest 1997) is an example of this approach, and is based on the hypothesis that; "if an integrated set of HRM practices is applied with a view to achieving normative goals of high commitment to the organisation, plus high quality and flexibility, then higher performance will result" (Guest, 1997: 265).

The four policy goals of integration, commitment, flexibility and quality are explained in earlier discussions of his theoretical framework and are presented below (1987,1995).

Table 2.2: Model of HRM (Guest, 1987)

Strategic integration
a) HR strategy should be integrated with business strategy
b) HRM policy goals and practices should be mutually reinforcing
c) Managers incorporate an HRM perspective into their decision making and that there is integration between strategic intent and management attitudes and behaviour

Employee Commitment
This includes behavioural commitment to pursue agreed goals, and attitudinal commitment reflected in a strong identification with the enterprise and involves - binding employees to the organisation by developing feelings of involvement.

Flexibility
Emphasis is placed on the organisation's capability to respond to change quickly and effectively through greater workforce flexibility. Functional flexibility is seen as important together with adaptable organisational structures with the capacity to manage innovation. This suggests a move away from hierarchical structures towards flatter, team based organisations.

High Quality
This refers to quality of staff, performance, management practice and public image. Great attention is paid to recruitment and selection, training, appraisal, goal setting and job design.

[4] While "one best way" of managing modern organisations have been advocated by Walton and others, it is recognised that "some environments are better suited to the commitment model than others", and include organisations which require "intricate teamwork, problem solving, organisational learning, and self-monitoring" (Walton, 1985: 79). Similarly Guest argues that if certain conditions cannot be met, many organisations would be unwise to pursue a "full blown" HRM strategy; including corporate leadership, strategic vision, technological-production feasibility, employee-industrial relations feasibility, ability to get HRM policies in place (Guest, 1987).

Like Storey's model of HRM, these four policy goals draw on both hard and soft dimensions of HRM. "Strategic integration" is analogous with notions of tight strategic control that places little emphasis on workers' concerns, although Guest argues that "this was really intended to be presented primarily as a "soft" version of HRM and was conceived before the hard/soft debate had started" (Guest, 1999a: 8). Emphasis is placed on the development of "high commitment" underpinned by a unitarist management ideology diametrically opposite to pluralist traditions within the UK (Guest, 1995; Storey 1995).

A key criticism of Guest and Storey's work is the incorporation of different sets of assumptions within one single model, and has led to debate about the plausibility of the normative view (Legge, 1994; 1995a,b; Noon, 1992; Truss and Gratton, 1994; Truss et al., 1997; Gratton et al., 1999). These arguments are made more complex by the implicit assumption made by Guest and Storey, that while hard and soft HRM practices are combined conceptually within one model, *empirically* they should be treated as mutually exclusive and can be objectively defined and measured (Guest, 1996, 1987, 1999a, 1999b; Storey, 1992, 1995).

A key argument that will be developed in this present study is that the soft/hard dimension is a false dichotomy, and that by the very nature of the employment relationship, employers are required to pursue both simultaneously. This issue is examined in the next section within a social constructionist perspective, and eschews the rational-analytic view of change implicit in much of the prescriptive advice about culture change.

From the latter perspective, models of planned change typically denote a top-down programmatic approach (for example unfreezing-moving-freezing; Lewin, 1958) which assumes that the outcomes of change are predictable and that change management can be conceptualised in the form of relatively easy discreet steps (Collins, 1998; Burnes, 1996). Prescriptions centre round the manipulation of "soft" variables, such as social norms and values, through the implementation of "re-educative" strategies which include role modelling, participation and communication, and education and training

(Williams et al., 1993; Goodstein and Burke, 1993). Attention is also drawn to the need for the manipulation of "hard" variables, structural changes that can reflect and support the new organisational vision. These may include corporate restructuring and increased operational autonomy at the level of the strategic business unit, redesign of plant layout, introduction of new technology and a change in operating mechanisms including reward, appraisal, monitoring, budgeting and control systems (Williams et al, 1993; Legge, 1984; Price and Murphy, 1993).

Increasingly, the change literature in the 1990s observed a shift in emphasis away from top down "indoctrinative" (Bate, 1994) approaches to ones that are more results-driven and allow for continuous and incremental change. Supporters of the latter view argue that organisations can achieve fundamental change in employee behaviours in the short-term through structural change strategies that are "task driven"(Kotter, 1995; Beer et al, 1993; Schaffer and Thompson, 1992; Hunter and Beaumont, 1993; Dunphy and Stace, 1993; McHugh et al, 1999). This is seen to be vital given that traditional culture change programmes require considerably more time and resources to implement at a time when the environment facing organisations is becoming increasingly turbulent.

While methodologies for initiating change are similar to "soft" change programmes in that emphasis is placed on the creation of a shared vision, learning processes are built round the achievement of specific short term performance targets (quick wins) emerging at the periphery, rather than the content of attitudes and ideas. Senior managers act primarily as facilitators of change with emphasis placed on a fundamental shift away from central to local control, allowing for the emergence of "bottom up change" that is more participative and collaborative.

The assumption here is that behaviour change will in the longer-term become rooted in social norms and shared values as the changes "that work" are institutionalised and links between the new approaches to work organisation and improved performance become clearer. As with the traditional HRM-based approach to change, discussion is dominated by a unitary and rational view of the firm that pays little regard to competing views of different stakeholders. Prescriptions for change assume that reaching

consensus amongst different stakeholders regarding the prioritising and nature of quick wins is relatively unproblematic.

2.2 Criticism of normative views

Criticism of normative models of HRM-based change highlights the polarisation within the change/HRM literature between popular practitioner oriented advice on the one hand, and the call for more robust theoretical models on the other (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992). A common theme amongst academics is the dominance of one-dimensional accounts of change written largely from a managerial perspective, that trivialise the more complex political and cultural dimensions of change (Mueller, 1994; Kamoche, 1998; Collins, 1998; Legge, 1995b; Marchington, 1995).

There are three important themes to be drawn from this critique that are pertinent to the methodological pathway of this thesis, and are outlined below. Firstly, there is a rejection of a unitary view of the organisation that draws attention to the significance of power and politics in strategic decision making. The second theme is concerned with the nature and the role of organisational culture in strategic change, and questions the extent to which this is open to manipulation by dominant coalitions. The final theme draws upon the above issues and provides the central argument which runs through this thesis - that the functionalist view of the organisation and accompanying interpretation of HRM practice constrains understanding of the processes by which such practices emerge and develop.

The remainder of this section presents a brief outline of each theme and provides the basis for more critical discussion located in part two.

2.2.1 Power and emergent strategy formation

The intellectual focus of the "soft" philosophy and the excellence school expresses a commonality of interests between management and workers that is underpinned by a highly instrumental orientation of culture. This presumes a far greater homogeneity amongst top management teams and a unitary view of change than that revealed by commentators such as Pettigrew (1973, 1977,

1985), Johnson (1990), Quinn 1980, and Mintzberg (1988, 1987a,b). Since the 1980s increasing attention has been drawn to the emergent nature of change and the observation that strategy can be regarded as an abstraction conceived in peoples' minds (Mintzberg, 1988), or largely the outcome of political manoeuvrings (Pfeffer, 1981).

Those writers that emphasise the significance of political behaviour argue that strategies and action are not likely to arise from some overarching rational intention shared by senior mangers, but result from bargaining and compromise between different coalitions within the organisation (Pfeffer, 1978, 1981; Boxall, 1992; 1996). Current work on organisational power has coalesced round two approaches, functionalist and critical theory (Hardy and Clegg, 1999: 382). The former adopts a managerialist view and assumes that power is a (more or less) malleable resource, which can be used as a management "tool". Top management is thus regarded as the legitimate interpreter of what are to be regarded as appropriate ideologies and values in an organisation (Alvesson, 1991: 217).

In contrast, critical theory adopts a social constructionist stance and views power as a means of domination, seeking to explore relationships between organisational discourse and the exercise of power and resistance (Hardy and Clegg, 1999). Within this perspective discourse is based on the idea that language is an essentially social and dynamic process shaped by and reflective of social structures (Fairclough, 1992).

Hardy has drawn the diverse literature on organisational power and politics into a framework composed of four dimensions: decision-making, non-decision making, symbolic and systemic (Hardy, 1985, 1994). These are clustered into three headings as shown below, and inform the analytical framework presented in chapter three concerned with the discursive nature of management activity and the role of HRM in the construction of shared meanings.

Table 2.3 Dimensions of Power

Instrumental power: Related to Lukes first and second dimensions of power (1974), instrumental power is concerned with controlling both decision-making and non-decision making arenas, in order to produce favourable outcomes. The first dimension is a defining characteristic of formal organisations (Pfeffer, 1981). The second is concerned with controlling the agenda by preventing contentious decisions raising to the surface. This non-decision making power allows dominant groups to ensure preferred outcomes without the need for formal authority.

Symbolic power: The means by which symbolic power is being exercised is unobtrusive and rests on the ability of individuals /coalitions to define the "reality" of others in order to ensure that opposition does not arise (Smircich, 1983a); Pettigrew, 1985; Lukes, 1974). This interpretive view is informed by the concept of socially constructed reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) and rejects functionalist arguments made by Pfeffer (1981), that there is only a weak relationship between symbolic power and substantive outcomes. Rather, it is argued that symbolic bases of power allow the possibility of having power even when situational conditions indicate otherwise (Hardy, 1994; Hardy and Clegg, 1999; Galang and Ferris, 1997).

Systemic power: Instrumental and symbolic power indicates conscious strategies on the part of individual actors to mobilise power. An alternative "Foucauldian" perspective treats power as a more pervasive phenomenon implicit in organisational discourse and present in all social relations (Hardy and Clegge, 1999: 377). Power is therefore not as predictable or deterministic as suggested by other perspectives, and has many unintentional effects.

2.2.2 Emergent change and the nature of culture

Since the 1980s, a wide range of process theories have been proffered by analysts in their study of the emergent nature of change, for example; Weick and Quinn, 1999; Mintzberg 1988; Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Hendry, 1995; Peck, 1994; Truss and Gratton, 1994; Gratton et al., 1999; Johnson, 1990,1993; Child and Smith, 1987; Pettigrew, 1987.

Dominated by an interpretive perspective that adopts an integrative approach to culture, Johnson's analysis of strategy formation is an example of work in this tradition (Johnson, 1990, 1993). Developing arguments made by Quinn (1980, 1983) and Pettigrew (1977, 1985), strategy is shown to be more influenced by cultural assumptions and values, than a rational (albeit political) analysis of a

"given", environment. From this perspective Johnson maintains that the environment cannot be objectively determined. Both the environment and the organisation itself are treated as being socially constructed through processes of enactment: processes through which people shape and structure their realities (Weick, 1979, 1995; Smircich, 1983a,b,c; Isabella, 1990; Silverman, 1970).

Linked with this understanding of the environment, organisational culture can be conceptualised as a root metaphor[5] that is difficult if not impossible to manipulate or manage (Ogbonna, 1992; Ogbonna and Harris, 1998; Pondy, 1983) and change is viewed as a continuous, open-ended and unpredictable process (Burnes, 1996: 170).

To cope with these complexities processual approaches to change favour "bottom-up" rather than "top-down" means of organisational change that is culturally sensitive (Dawson, 1994; Wilson, 1992; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1993). Similar to the more rational oriented task-aligned approach, advocates of the processual (or cultural) view recognise that the responsibility for organisational change is becoming more devolved given the pace and complexity of environmental change. In contrast to the task-aligned view, analysts who adopt a cultural perspective argue that the management of change is regarded as "essentially a cultural and cognitive phenomenon" rather than an analytical, rational exercise (Johnson, 1993: 624, cited by Burnes, 1996: 190). In this respect major organisational change requires changing the controlling or dominant organisational culture. Theorists differ in the extent to which they consider that this is open to manipulation, and many take their points of departure from Schein's well known model of organisational culture outlined in table 2.4.

Schein's framework builds on the premise found in much of the research in the interpretive field that assumes that organisational culture is something that is negotiated and shared through small groups, and which can be aggregated at organisational level.

[5] For the purposes of this present study the term "root metaphor" will be treated as the "key metaphor of which knowledge about a subject is based and which is used to start off thought processes that expand that knowledge" (Grant, 1996:194). Alvesson explains that the use of culture as a root metaphor, or " all-embracing view of an organizational reality" comprises a range of competing "organizing metaphors" that can be compared against four dimensions; functionalist/non-functionalist, objective/subjective ,cognituion/emotion, freewill/determinism (Alvesson, 1994: 25).

Table 2.4: Schein's model of organisational culture (Schein, 1985)

Level one : Basic assumptions: taken-for granted sets of shared meanings amongst organisational members. These have been described elsewhere in the literature as theories-in-use (Argyris and Shon, 1978), paradigm (Johnson, 1990), guiding visions (Quinn 1980, 1993) or mental models (Senge, 1990).

Level two: Values and beliefs: are part of an individual's conceptual apparatus which they knowingly hold and which they use to make decisions and evaluate outcomes. Values can evolve into taken-for-granted assumptions, or remain conscious.

Level three: Artefacts: the most visible level of culture and includes the physical environment, overt behaviours, language and symbols [6]. They can provide important insight into prevailing assumptions, and processes of sensemaking within the organisation (Gioia and Chittipendi, 1991).

In common with the functionalist approach, emphasise is placed on the importance of visionary or transformational leadership and the management of symbols (Dawson, 1994; Bryman, 1999). Points of departure between the two perspectives generally centre round the ontology of culture and the extent to which the enactment process and symbolic constructs are politicised and amenable to manipulation. Influenced by the interpretive perspective, Schein (1985) argues that norms and values are only the more visible (or reportable) manifestations of culture and that greater attention needs to be given by advocates of planned change to what he describes as core assumptions and beliefs, systems of collective beliefs that are; "shared by members of an organisation, and that define in a basic "taken-for-granted" fashion, an organization's view of itself and its environment (1985: 6)".

A multi-level analysis of organisational culture is presented that distinguishes collective beliefs in terms of their visibility. Even though these manifest themselves in many ways the most influential, described as basic assumptions, tend to be pre-conscious or what has otherwise been termed as "out-of-awareness schemata" (Marshak, 1996). While eschewing the more simple interpretation of culture portrayed in the excellence literature, Schein continues to favour a functionalist/ integrationist view. He argues that

[6] A symbol refers to something that stands for something else through association or convention. In this sense, symbols are "complex signs in that they suggest a cultural, historical, or political interpretation; that is, they go beyond signalling a particular response, like traffic lights indicating stop" (Putnam et al., 1999: 136).

(while difficult) a change in overt behaviours and attitudes *can* generate a change in deep-rooted assumptions (collective beliefs) over time (discussed further in part two).

Schein warns that an emphasis on harmony and shared norms does not necessarily make an organisation more efficient. Rather, cultural assumptions and behaviours can become so stable they are difficult to "unlearn" even when they become dysfunctional. This makes organisations resistant to change and leads to what Brooks and Bate (1994) have described as "collective blindness" amongst organisational members. This is likely to exclude the more complex forms of learning that take place when people question the assumptions that guide their views and actions and which are increasingly recognised as important characteristics of organisational learning (Argyris and Shon, 1978, 1996; Stacey, 1993; Burgoyne, 1995).

2.2.3 Broadening the debate about HRM

Linked with the above arguments, normative models have been criticised for being overly concerned with a functionalist perspective that is concerned with searching for regularities and causal relationships. Current research is dominated by attempts to develop an understanding of what practices constitute a high commitment model of HRM, what variables affect the development and diffusion of high commitment practices, and testing whether or not the outcomes of the high commitment model are superior to traditional Fordist management (for example; (Wood and Albanese, 1995; Roche, 1999; Wood, 1998; Huselid, 1995 ; MacDuffie, 1995; Arthur, 1994; Ichniowski et al., 1993; Pfeffer, 1994; Guest and Hoque, 1994; Guest, 1997; Patterson et al., 1997; Tyson, et al., 1997).

Discussion has also focused on the plausibility and relevance of normative models of HRM, pointing to the inherent tensions between the hard (strategic integration) and soft (commitment) versions of HRM noted earlier (Sisson, 1994; Legge, 1995a; Keenoy, 1990b). This mirrors earlier discussion in the management literature about the "caring" and "controlling" aspects of the personnel function (Watson, 1977; Keenoy, 1990a) and has led to much debate about the gap between "rhetoric" and "reality" and how HRM may be realised in practice (Sisson, 1994; Storey, 1992). HRM has been described as

simply a "buzz term" for "fashionable ideas" (Eldridge et al., 1991) reflected by Skinner's well known article "Big hat, no cattle" (Skinner, 1981). Since the early1990s, inquiries of this nature have been criticised by a small but growing number of analysts for adopting a too restrictive view of the phenomenon of HRM. Writers such as Kamoche (1995a,b) demonstrate how different images of HRM emerge when the subject is examined with different "paradigmatic lenses". Arguments are informed by the social constructionist perspective (Berger and Luckman, 1966) and the linguistic approach which focuses on the way in which reality is verbally constructed (Kamoche, 1995a; Watson, 1994, 1995a, 1995b; Keenoy and Anthony, 1992; Keenoy, 1999). HRM is treated as a powerful new form of management rhetoric that is important in legitimising managerial action, and as a form of control through the manipulation of meanings. The next section will explore this issue further and develop arguments central to this thesis, that the discursive practices of HRM can play a significant role in shaping the processes and outcomes of strategic change.

Part 2: The construction of organisation and the dynamics of HRM-based change

Preceding sections have questioned the theoretical analysis of HRM underpinned by research that is typically designed to test linkages between "bundles" of HRM practices and organisational outcomes. This second part of the literature review looks at alternative methodologies currently being used in more qualitatively-oriented studies in HRM. It pays particular attention to ways in which the organisation is socially constructed, and to the role of HRM discourse in the construction and deconstruction of meanings. Arguments are based on a rejection of fixed meanings and the traditional distinction between structure and agency found within functionalist and interpretive research designs that are informed by the position taken by Burrell and Morgan (1979).

Burrell and Morgan suggest that analysts must make decisions about whether or not to accept the subjective or objective aspects of " reality" on the one hand, and conflict/change or consensus/stability on the other. Critics have argued that these either/or choices results in polarisation of research designs that are " artificial and stultifying" (Watson, 1997: 5). In light of this, increasing attention is being paid to the

development of multi-paradigmatic or "postmodern" research designs (Willmott, 1995, 1993; Watson, 1997; Kamoche, 1995b; Gioia and Pitre, 1990; Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). Following this line of thought, this present study favours the interpretive perspective, but also draws upon the functionalist and radical-humanist views in order to make sense of the processes of HRM-based change. It is argued that organisational members actively enact the reality which they inhabit and that discourse is a critical medium in this sense making process (Fairclough, 1992; Mumby and Clair, 1997; Oswick et al., 1997; Grant et al., 1998; du Gay and Salaman, 1998; Musson and Cohen, 1999).

2.3 Conception of organisational reality and the role of discourse

Analysts who study sensemaking [7] tend to "oscillate ontologically" (Weick, 1995: 35) between functionalist and interpretive positions in their study of organisation (for example Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Pettigrew, 1985; Smircich 1983c). Weick argues that people engage in oscillation when they attempt to show how the supposedly concrete aspects of organisational life are dependent on subjective constructions, "but then smuggle in the realist assumptions that posit constraints and objects that exist independent of subjective constructions" (Weick, 1995: 34).

Giddens's structuration theory attempts to transcend and synthesise concepts of determinism and structure with voluntarism and agency (Cohen, 1997). This position falls under the rubric of structurationism that views the relationship between individual agency and social structure as a "duality " (Giddens, 1993). It is based on the assumption that while people enact their reality, they treat the result of their ongoing social structuring process (structures) as an external, objective "reality" that constrains actions and orientations (Giddens, 1993:4). As a result, structures are both the medium and outcome of interactions and in contrast to more conventional definitions, are described by Giddens as " systems of generative rules and resources that members draw

[7] Most analysts referred to Weick's conception of sensemaking when referring to the term which is used to "keep action and cognition together". "To talk about sensemaking is to talk about reality as an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations" (Weick, 1995: 15). The concept of enactment is essential to the notion of sensemaking and refers to the processes by which people actively create or construct their environment; "People are very much a part of their own environments. They act, and in doing so create the materials that become the constraints and opportunities they face " (1995: 31).

upon but also thereby change, in their continuous production and reproduction of society" (Giddens, 1976: 127). Giddens talks of a "hierarchy of action and structure" in terms of "many modes of interconnection between individuals and collectivities" [8] (1993: 6). In this sense he draws connections between "micro" structures of everyday talk and action at the level of the individual, group and organisation, and " macro" structures of society and its institutions.

Cohen, Duberley and McAuley (1999) observe that it is not Giddens' intention for structuration theory to be used as a rigorous analytical framework, but as a "sensitizing concept " to be used in sociological research which highlights the fundamental relationship between processes of enablement and constraint. Importantly it serves as a means of bridging the gap between subjectivist and objectivist views and allows for both a more fluid and broader analysis of social structures than that typically provided by functional and interpretive research designs (Reed, 1997).

Pettigrew's analysis of change at ICI (1985) is an example of in-depth case study research that draws upon Giddens work (1979) in order to demonstrate how "context" and human agency are inextricably linked. Like Giddens his notion of "contextualist research" suggests that the analyst consider social construction processes on an equal footing alongside more "objective" social structures. According to Pettigrew, social structures (which he refers to as context), are not just stimulus environments, but should be regarded as "a nested arrangement of structures and processes where the subjective interpretations of actors perceiving, comprehending, learning, and remembering help shape process (of change). Thus processes are both constrained by contexts and shape contexts, in the direction of either preserving or altering them"(Pettigrew, 1995: 95).

The enabling and constraining features of context are well illustrated in the ICI case in which Pettigrew explains that; "Features of intra-organisational context and socio-economic context can be mobilised by dominant or aspiring groups in order to

[8] Reviewing Layder's (1994) critique of Giddens, Cohen (1997) explains that structure is typically used in the sociological literature as being interchangeable with social systems, and "tends to refer to the institutional features of society as opposed to the micro-features of face-to face-interaction" (Layder: 138). By contrast, Giddens' definition includes "micro" methods and rules for production and interpretation of everyday conversation as social structures.

legitimise existing definitions of the core strategic concerns, to help justify new priorities, and to de-legitimise other novel and threatening definitions of the organisation situation"[9] (Pettigrew, 1985: 45).

The content of change is viewed as ultimately a product of this legitimisation process, although this is often expressed in rational or analytic terms. The focal point of Pettigrew's investigation is the legitimisation strategies developed by Organisational Development groups to effect change within four ICI divisions and at corporate level. Central to this analysis is the concept of the "management of meaning" (...) "a process of symbol construction and value use designed to create legitimacy for one's ideas, actions and demands, and to de-legitimise the demands of one's opponents" (1985: 442). The concept usefully combines political and cultural views on process allowing for examination of deliberate management attempts to facilitate "ideological reorientation", which in the ICI case included symbolic acts of questioning accompanied by "leaks" of highly critical reports that generated dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Other examples were found within the realm of HRM and included management training programmes and " (...) efforts made to influence patterns of socialisation by changing career paths and reward systems; visibly using the newly promoted as role models to additively signal behaviour required in the new culture" (1985: 475).

On emphasising the role of symbolism and language in processes of legitimacy Pettigrew points out that, " Contextually appropriate words may be used to give legitimacy to faded causes and new ideas, or to breathe life back into established practices which are under threat" (1985: 44). No detailed analysis is given however of changes in language use, or how its links to the outer organisational context may be traced to the emergence and development of different discourses within the organisation (Fairclough, 1992).

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[9] Outer context refers to the economic, political and business environment of the firm and the way changes in these factors help shape the market and competitive position of the firm. The inner context refers to the business strategy, structure, cultural and political context which help shape the management processes through which ideas for strategic change proceed (page 455).

This thesis makes more explicit the special role of discourse on the creation of meaning and the production and reproduction of ideologies[10] within the organisation. It reflects an emerging focus of interest in current management literature on "organisational discourse" in which discourse is treated as central to organisation and organising (Grant et al., 1998; Hardy et al., 1998; Woodilla, 1998). From this perspective discourse can be viewed as a "a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning" (Fairclough, 1992: 64). This definition provided by Fairclough undermines conventional distinctions between "talk", "action" and "practice" than that portrayed in the prescriptive management literature. As Marshak (1998) observes, within the enterprise discourse, typically there is a "bias for action" (Peters and Waterman, 1982), with no recognition that talk and action can take place simultaneously. Rather, talk and action are implicitly ordered (uni-directional);"talk at best helps to lead to action and at the worst can block or prevent one getting to action" (Marshak, 1998:19).

A growing number of analysts challenge the subordination of "talk" (written and spoken) to action, arguing that discourse should not be reduced to the status of speech and writing alone but incorporates an action component that has social and political implications (for example; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Grant et al., 1998; duy Gay and Salaman, 1996, 1992, 1998; van Dijk, 1997a,b, 1998; Watson, 1994). This view of discourse informs a range of perspectives in which an understanding of the nature of language has been shown to be central to an understanding of organisational change (for example; Taylor (1999), Putnam et al., (1999); Musson and Cohen (1999); Ford and Ford (1995); Ford (1999).

Within this field of study, new analytic metaphors have been introduced that cast the organisation as "text", "intertext" or "conversation" (Taylor, 1999; Putnam et al., 1999; Ford, 1999; Clegg et al.; 1999) and change described in terms of " shifting conversations" (Ford 1999).

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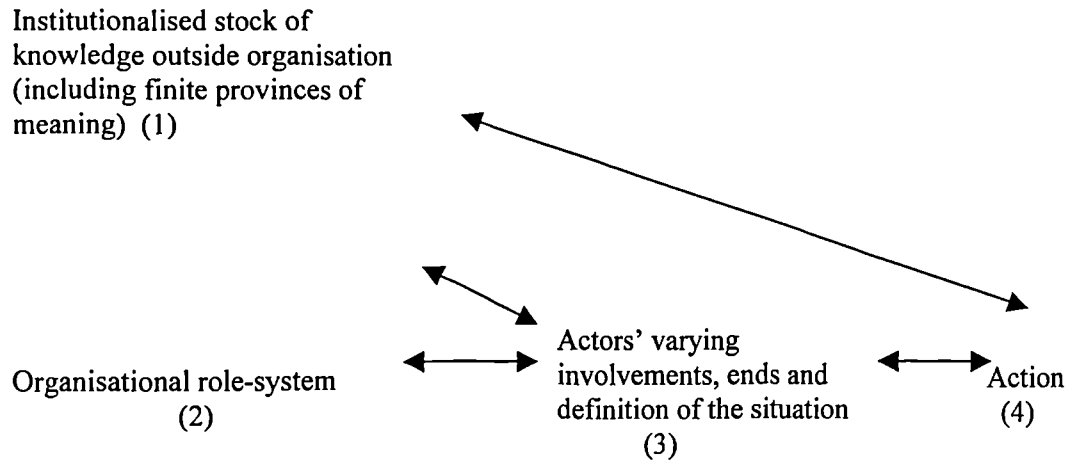
[10] Ideology is understood as "a relatively coherent set of assumptions, beliefs and values about a demarcated part of social reality, being illuminated in a selective and legitimizing way, restricting autonomous critical reflection and sometimes favouring sectional interests" (Alvesson, 1991: 209).

The next section will identify early qualitative analyses of organisation that are consistent with the organisation-as-culture metaphor (Morgan, 1997), and which focus on ways in which managers construct shared meanings at the workplace. It is followed by an examination of the relatively new field of study on organisational discourse in which the concept of intertextuality is introduced as an analytic device to describe and explain multiple discourses within the organisation, consistent with the differentiation perspective on culture (Meyerson and Martin, 1987).

2.3.1 The management of meaning and role of language

Silverman's seminal work, Theory of Organisations (1970) offers a conceptual framework that provides a useful starting point for a discussion of how reality is practically constructed within the organisation and to ways in which managers may shape organisational members' interpretive frames. His "action frame of reference" shown below, maps the processes by which shared meanings may develop and become institutionliased in the form of goals, rules and structures (role system). These are described as the "rules of the game", described as cultural artefacts that exert a strong influence over human behaviour, and may be perceived as "social facts".

Figure 2.1: Silverman (1970: 151)



The role-system reflects the consequences of the behaviour of various actors (4), as well at the stock of knowledge they bring in from outside (1). Present participants are said to continuously shape and re-shape the rules of the game (3), and are "influenced by the

changing stock of knowledge in the wider world, by their own particular interpretation of the situation, and by the form of attachment to the existing system" (Silverman, 1970: 196). This pattern of interaction is shaped by the perceived ability of certain individuals to impose a particular definition of the situation upon others, rendering the enactment process open to the use of power, or as Berger and Luckman put it, "He who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definitions" (Berger and Luckman, 1966: 101, cited in Silverman, 1970:138).

Smircich explains that leaders are in a prime position to use power in this way because it is legitimised by authority relationships within the organisation which institutionalise a hierarchical pattern of interaction in which it is accepted that the leader has the right and the obligation to define reality (Smircich, 1983a,b).

The importance of leadership in the creation of shared meanings has been identified in a number of studies on the role of "symbolic management" in the creation and transmission of organisational culture (Smircich, 1983a,b; Pfeffer, 1981; Smircich and Morgan, 1982; Pettigrew, 1985). Organisational symbols open to manipulation encompass a range of forms, many of which are found within the realm of personnel practice and described by Trice and Beyer (1984, 1985) as "rites of passage", for example induction programmes, promotions and terminations. Others include stories, myths, celebrations, ceremonies and company logos, that help the reader make sense of organisational values and behaviours (Dandridge, 1983; Putnam et al., 1999). Such mechanisms allow managers to create a focus of attention that frames the context within which subordinates develop new interpretive frames and behaviours at the workplace. The process is similar to what Schutz refers to as the " bracketing " of experience (Goffman, 1974, cited by Smirich and Morgan, 1982) and Weick as the "punctuation of contexts" (Weick, 1979, cited by Smirich et al., 1983a). Smircich and Morgan (1982) conclude from their case study evidence of change within an insurance company, that even weak leadership involves definitions of situations; "Their (leaders) actions and utterances project and shape imagery in the minds of the led, which is influential one way or another in shaping actions within the setting as the whole" (Smircich and Morgan 1982: 269).

The authors are careful to point out the voluntary nature of sensemaking activities by organisational members, and that organisations are made up of "multiple realities". These are recognised as a "source of powerful internal tensions within the leadership situation", and underwrite much of the political activities within organisation, described by Berger and Luckman as "negotiated social construction" (1966).

This process of negotiating meanings is exemplified by Gioia and Chittipendi's account of change within a large public university (1991). The study applies the concepts of sensemaking (Weick, 1979, 1995) and "sensegiving" to describe and explain ways in which organisational members reached a common understanding of a vision for change. The former term refers to meaning construction of the parties involved; the latter is concerned with the process of attempting to influence the meaning construction of others. Shared understanding of the intended nature of strategic change is described as emerging through a process of "a sequential and reciprocal cycle of sensemaking and sensegiving to expanding audiences within the organisation" (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 443). Symbols and symbolic action are shown to serve as important medium in these processes of social construction and included the hiring of consultants, personnel changes at senior levels, and the use of a new language of "strategic planning". The latter, embedded in a "widening circle of consultation and feedback " is shown to be critical to the emergence of a shared vision.

2.3.2 Role of conversation in the construction of shared meanings

Gioia and Chittipendi's conclusions complement a range of studies on organisational change noted by Weick and Quinn (1999), that highlight the significance of more open and fluid dialogue between managers and subordinates in the creation of shared understandings and more innovative thinking (Schein, 1996; Barret et al., 1995; Dixon, 1997; Quinn, 1996; Ford and Ford, 1995, cited by Weick and Quinn, 1999: 381). Weick and Quinn propose that the most powerful change interventions can occur at the level of "everyday conversation". They cite the work of Dixon (1997) and Quinn (1996) who demonstrate ways in which more open-ended dialogue amongst organisation participants can encourage the exchange of multiple perspectives from which new

meanings can be generated. Dixon describes processes such as "whole system in a room" and "appreciative enquiry" that can be used to facilitate the questioning of assumptions and construction of new meanings. Such mediums are described as "Hallways" consistent with double and triple loop learning in which people question underlying "theories-in-use" (Argyris and Shon, 1996).

Forums of the kind noted above, allow for the emergence of dialogue described by Westley (1990) and Liedtka and Rosenblum (1996) as "strategic conversations". These constitute ongoing "local" conversations across the organisation and "organisational" conversations occurring centrally within the organisation. Attention is drawn to the tradition to confine strategic conversations to senior managers and the need for greater involvement at all levels within the organisation in order to generate shared understandings. Quinn (1996) presents similar arguments and puts forward a normative framework based on Bird's (1990) notion of "good conversations" that displays the following characteristics - vocal, reciprocated, issues-oriented, rational (clearly articulated), imaginative, and honest.

Ford (1999) argues that relatively little of the change literature is devoted to language-based perspectives and calls for more in-depth inquiry into the role of conversation in organisational change. He promotes a way of analysing workplace conversations that draws upon language/literacy theory to expose the relationship between language, action and processes of managing change. Conversation in this context includes a mix of spoken, visual and written interactions that are treated as both an expression and outcome of social construction. Change is viewed not as a single entity but a series of conversational episodes organised around particular themes (e.g. teamworking). This dynamic is described in the form of "shifting conversations" which can range from a single speech act (Searle, 1969) to an extensive network of speech acts which constitute different forms of discourse such as arguments or narratives. Ford explains that change leaders can bring into existence a new "conversational reality" by initiating, maintaining and completing conversations of the kind identified by Ford and Ford (1995). These are

clustered into four types, made up of combinations of speech acts[11]. Each type plays a different role in producing organisational change as illustrated in table 2.5, and acts to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct existing realities within the organisation.

Table 2.5 The conversations of change (Ford and Ford 1995)

Initiative conversations: These constitute the first phase of change. They rely on assertions, directives, promises, and declarations, to focus attention on what could or should be done. For example a claim regarding some market imperative coupled with a request or promise and a declaration of a new future can be used to launch a new project.

Conversations for understanding: These are generally characterised by assertions and expressives used to determine cause-effect relationships. This provides an opportunity to examine assumptions (and implications) that underlie thinking; develop a common language amongst change participants; create a shared context in which people learnt how to talk to each other. Key by-products of such conversations include specifications that define the intended end point of change, and involvement and support on the part of those engaged in the change.

Conversations for performance: Getting into action
These are combinations of requests and promises spoken that focus on generating action and intended results (expressives or assertions are considered "noise" at this stage). Ford and Ford argue that many managers rely too heavily on conversations for understanding, believing that understanding alone makes people act (Beer et al., 1990, cited by Ford and Ford, 1995: 17) Performance conversations are necessary for co-ordinated action, required to move the change forward.

Conversations for closure: Completing the change.
These are characterised by assertions, expressives and declarations to bring about an end to the change process. It involves summaries, justifications for termination, expressions of positive sentiments, and discussions of continuity in which things are related to a larger context that is not ending.

Ford observes that while change leaders are able to shape organisational realities through management of conversations, this dynamic is constrained as well as enabled by existing networks of conversation and the orders of discourse in which conversations evolve. The latter refer to a set of underlying patterns and conventions, which embody the processes by which discourse and practices occur. Controlling the order of discourse

[11] These include assertives or claims, directives or requests, commissives or promises, expressives that convey an affective state, and declarations that create a new set of new operating conditions.

is a key issue addressed by critical discourse analysts who focus more closely on the question of power and control in organisations. These issues are examined below.

2.3.3 Processes of textuality and organisational change

Critical theorists move beyond the prime concern of the interpretive approach which focuses on processes by which organisational members generate shared meaning, to explore connections between everyday talk and systems of power, inequality, and injustice (Mumby and Clair, 1997). Within this broad and multidisciplinary stream of research, attention is drawn to the ideological aspects of communication, ways in which powerful groups use communication to achieve organisational control and how this is resisted. Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony is widely used in critiques of this kind conceived as a "complex web of conceptual and material arrangements producing the very fabric of everyday life" (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 87).

As Alvesson and Deetz observe, the integration of these arrangements favours dominant groups and that the activity of both dominated and dominant groups is best characterised as a type of "consent". A number of studies have investigated processes where culture and "culture engineering" are described as pointing towards hegemony (for example Alvesson, 1994; Mumby, 1988; and Knights and Morgan; 1987, cited by Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 88). Knights and Willmott's (1987) account of a two-day conference organised by senior managers of a life-assurance company (Pensco) is an example of work in this tradition. They apply Giddens' (1976, 1984) structuration theory to reveal a set of practices concerned with agenda setting and application of the team metaphor used by senior managers to define corporate purpose and the legitimacy of their leadership during the conference. As other critical theorists point out however, management control strategies at Pensco were shown to be tempered by "invisible" forms of resistance that are difficult to control, for example repeated failure to meet deadlines and the reluctance to adopt "innovative management techniques".

The instability of homogenisation of norms and values revealed by the above case is a central issue raised by postmodern research perspectives (Putnam et al., 1999; Taylor, 1999; Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). Analysts within this tradition vary in their beliefs

about the extent to which dominant coalitions can achieve hegemonic control at the workplace. Points of departure centre round the premise that the person is born into ongoing discourses and is; "always social first and only mistakenly claims the personal self as the origin of experience" (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 97). In other words, the meanings carried along with discourse, and positions that it makes available, constitute a sense of "self" (subjectivity) as well as an external reality for that individual. Alvesson and Deetz explain that there are two variations on this theme within the postmodern literature. One views discursive closure as temporary though often reproduced, and highlights the fragmentation of identities in an increasingly heterogeneous world. The other, based on a Foucauldian perspective, tends to emphasise the stability of dominant discourses as a result of a network of power relations in operation. From both viewpoints organisations are cast as "texts" (written and spoken language) and focus placed upon the process of "textuality", the construction and interpretation of texts, their emergence, ambiguity and paradoxicality (Linstead, 1999: 5).

Van Dijk and Fairclough provide influential approaches to the analyses of such processes, showing how text and context are intertwined with action and meaning (van Dijk 1997a,b, 1998; Fairclough, 1992; 1995). Both view discourse as a form of language use (in speech and writing), that reproduces, creates, and challenges existing power relations. Described as a form of social practice, discourse is defined as a "communicative" or "discursive event" placed in a dialectical relationship with its context in the sense that; "it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it " (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 259).

For Fairclough the analysis of discursive events is three dimensional, and includes simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice. Text refers to written and spoken language in use, while "discursive practices" allude to the processes by which texts are produced and interpreted. The social practice dimension refers to the institutional and organisational factors surrounding the discursive event and how they might shape the nature of the discursive

practice. Similarly van Dijk (1997a,b, 1998) argues for analysis of language use (the form and content of text), the communication of beliefs (cognition), and interaction in social situations. Organisational members are seen to be oriented to and by multiple discourses, consistent with the differentiation approach identified in Meyerson and Martin's reading of cultures (1987).

Conventions which underlie discursive events are conceptualised by Fairclough in terms of "orders of discourse", dominant combinations of text types and discursive practices and the relations between them (Fairclough, 1995: 135), for instance in businesses, the discursive practices of the Board room, of the shopfloor, of human resource management. Combining the theory of intertextuality[12] with Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Fairclough argues that discursive practices are facets of "hegemonic struggle" in which dominant groups seek to achieve hegemony over the meanings and minds of others, as well as struggle on the part of dominated groups. Strategies of legitimation and (de)legitimation are central to the development of hegemonic, discursive power. These may focus on the context of text production (for example its access and use), positive or negative representations in discourse, or by presenting speakers and discourse themselves as legitimate or illegitimate (van Dijk, 1998: 261), and the content of text (including preferences for specific language or genre).

Critical theorists typically draw attention to such processes of discursive closure in order to reveal what alternatives have been bypassed, not noticed or repressed and how this is both achieved and resisted. Examples include Westwood's account of the introduction of a worker participation scheme within a multinational pharmaceutical corporation (1987), and Knights and McCabe's more recent study of management in a UK retail bank (Knights and McCabe, 1999). Other studies cited by Knights and McCabe which point to the "cultural hegemony" of total quality management include, Wendt, 1994; Webb, 1996 and Tuckman, 1994 (Knights and McCabe 1999: 4).

[12] The concept of intertextuality is used to highlight the heterogeneity of texts, constituted by configurations of discourses that have been conventionalised for particular categories of activity in particular types of social situation.

The following sections will identify further examples within the HRM literature of those processes used to manufacture consensus in the interests of the management elite, and also processes of resistance. While Foucault's work typically informs such debate,[13] his arguments have been criticised by Fairclough and others for a general lack of attention to agency, resistance and emancipation (Clegg and Hardy, 1999, Findlay and Newton, 1998, McKinlay and Starkey, 1998, van Dijk, 1997a,b, 1998, Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

Fairclough for example, argues that Foucault fails to explain ways in which discursive practices are not only shaped by, but also shape structures. His framework has been usefully applied to uncover the dynamic nature of discourse within the organisation and how texts both enable and constraint the material practices and lived experiences of organisational participants (for example Cohen, Duberley and McAuley (1999), Musson and Cohen (1999). From this perspective all social actors have some ability to manage meanings and as Philips (1997) observes, while the systemic dimension of power often privileges organisational elites, no single group of actors necessarily benefit all the time. Citing Clegg (1989) he argues that; "(...) this (systemic) dimension of power acts much like the deformations in a pool table. While the deformations always affect the game, how they effect the game depends on how the game proceeds"(Phillips, 1997: 44).

2.3.4 Textual analyses of HRM

Observations about the discursive nature of management and organisation complements earlier work in which management is seen as an oral tradition (Gowler and Legge, 1983) and more recent discussion about the constitutive nature of HRM (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992; Keenoy 1999; Kamoche 1995a; Watson, 1994, 1995a,b). For example, Kamoche drawing upon the work of Parkin (1975), shows how the language of HRM can be placed on a continuum ranging from rhetoric to plain speaking, and how a move from one to another increases the level of symbolic complexity. He argues that the language of HRM is an important influence on people's perceptions of reality, and that; " The reality of HRM is seen to exist in the first instance in the minds of organisational

[13] Power is treated as not something that one possesses, but something that resides in prevailing discourses which are experienced as fact, making alternatives difficult to conceive of, let alone enact.

actors, who subsequently *objectify* their subjective experience through language and ritual" (Kamoche, 1995a: 369).

Adopting a similar stance Keenoy argues that the empirical refutation of the claims of HRM is of marginal relevance to its cultural impact (Keenoy, 1990b, 1999); "HRM is a phenomenon which has been constituted and enacted by significant social actors – including managers, employees, unions, politicians, consultants, academics and publishers – all apparently intent on effecting changes in employment-related matters" (Keenoy 1999: 2).

While from a social constructionist viewpoint there can be no universal definition of HRM, the plethora of meanings and expressions provided in the HRM literature are strongly associated with a new "root metaphor" that contrasts with the root metaphor of "old" industrial relations. Dunn characterises the former by one of low trust, conflict and that "does not sell hope " (Dunn, 1990: 17)[14]. In contrast, the root metaphor offered by HRM provides a different language form that is described as "much more open, expansive and even heroic" and can be portrayed as something which offers the company a salvation from competitive pressures and/or recession (Grant, 1996).

Legge develops similar arguments, suggesting that the "new label" of HRM asserts a new dynamic image: "of line management's right to manipulate and ability to generate and develop resources". (Legge, 1995b: 88). Analysts have highlighted a number of key environmental changes that have shaped the emergence of this business oriented discourse outlined in table 2.6 (page 47) and include changes in global competition, trade union power and government/societal values.

Couched in unitarist terms, Dunn concludes that the root metaphor of HRM is about organisations embarking on a journey that takes them away from old industrial relations manifested by structures of collective bargaining, towards HRM characterised by "essentially managerial concepts such as performance, quality, commitment,

[14] Dunn adopts Black's definition of the term, described as a "conceptual archetype" and as "a systematic repertoire of ideas by means of which a given thinker describes, by analytical extension, some domain to which those ideas do not immediately and literally apply" (Black, 1962: 241).

involvement and flexibility" (Dunn, 1990: 4). These are in effect the more visible cultural artefacts of HRM that present themselves for examination: the rhetorics, the flattened organisational structures, productivity improvements, empowered teams and so on (Keenoy, 1999). Echoing Dunn's work, Keenoy regards HRM as a "process of becoming", and draws upon the metaphor of a hologram to visualise the phenomenon. This representation is used to highlight its multifaceted nature[15] which comprises a range of new (and fluid) linguistic categories, for example excellence, customer-care and empowerment, that provide a conceptual re-envisioning of work relations "in which "nothing has changed" but everything will be *perceived* differently" (Keenoy, 1997: 836). "HRMism" is used as a generic term to signify the diverse meanings and practices that have come to be subsumed within it (Keenoy, 1997, 1999). Similarly Grant talks of "HRM-oriented workplaces" (Grant, 1996a) and Ezzamel of "HRM-type" developments (Ezzamel et al., 1996). The use of such terms highlights the problem of defining the boundaries of HRM but nevertheless signifies an HRM discourse distinct from the language of personnel management, and which can be viewed as a "discursive resource" (Watson, 1995a).

The false dichotomy between hard and soft HRM

The notion of discursive resource introduced by Watson is similar to the concept of interpretive repertoires developed by Potter and Wetherell (Potter and Wetherell, 1994)[16]. Social actors draw upon these in different ways and at different times to achieve a variety of purposes, "where these be interest based purposes, or broader ones like that of making sense of what is happening in the organization" (Watson, 1994: 12). His argument draws attention to political relations that are inherent in the enactment process, and which are examined below. Watson also emphasises the reflexive, constitutive nature of HRM and refers to the 'shaping' of human action and organisation activity. Equivalent to the idea of structuration, this shaping process has two sides; "The

[15] The hologram perspective offers an alternative to the "dualistic limitations of modernism" reflected in much of the debate on HRM i.e. "hard" or "soft", "core" or "periphery". Keenoy argues that Holographically, with respect to HRM practices they are never "hard" or "soft": despite *appearances*, they are always *both* "hard" and "soft".

[16] "Re-currently used systems of terms used for characterising and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena which are constituted through the limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions and are often organised around specific metaphors and figures of speech (tropes)" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 149).

side in which individuals can be seen to initiate, choose and shape their world, and the side in which they can be seen as being constrained and shaped by influences external to themselves" (Watson, 1994: 25).

Using the hologram metaphor, Keenoy follows a similar line of argument, and concludes that "insofar as we act in response to our perceptions, we actively constitute and (re-)create HRMism (...) We are both within the hologram and simultaneously the creators of the hologram (Keenoy, 1999: 15). Importantly, Keenoy eschews the empirical distinctions made between "hard" and "soft" HRM by Storey and Guest (Storey 1992, 1995; Guest, 1987, 1995, 1999a), and argues that; "In common usage, there has been a strong tendency to treat each component of these dyads as distinctive, concrete and separate forms rather than as encoded, mutually implicated, interdependent "tendencies". Hence, usually, the components are located at either end of a linear dimension which polarizes and separates the two elements: "hard" precludes "soft", "rhetoric" precludes "reality", "core" precludes "periphery" and vice versa" (Keenoy, 1999: 14).

A key contribution of this present study (explained in chapter six) is to consider the interdependencies between "hard" and "soft" aspects of HRM, how these figure in processes of strategic change, and are related to macro and micro-social structures. Of chief concern is an explanation of how the language and practice of HRM changes over time at the level of the firm. Eschewing the mutually exclusive nature of "hard" and "soft" versions of HRM portrayed in much of the HRM literature, HRM is treated as inevitably a "mix" of both economic and humanist concerns, embedded in the structural ambiguity of the personnel function described by Keenoy; "As regulators of the employment relationship, the role of personnel has frequently been seen as one of managing the inherent tension and conflict between the imperatives of the market, the organisational demands for control of employees, and the individual needs of people in work. Indeed it is these permanent tensions characterising the employment relationship which lie at the heart of the historical ambiguity of personnel management (Keenoy 1990a: 8)".

Noting the confusion in the literature about the conceptual identity of HRM, Keenoy points out that Storey (1992) acknowledges that HRM has no singular discursive meaning and uses the discourse to both collapse and integrate "hard" and "soft" aspects of management, but; "When it comes to his "empirical verification", the integrity of HRMism can only be sustained by splitting them (distinctive approaches to management) up again, modernist fashion, into "hard" and "soft" forms or dimensions" (1999:5).

Similar observations are made of Legge's analysis of HRM in which she differentiates between normative, descriptive, critical and behavioural "models" of personnel management (Legge 1995b). Legge recognises that personnel practice inevitably deals with two potentially incompatible orientations; the "personnel" and the "management" approaches to the function (Thomason, 1975) or the "caring" versus "control" approaches (Watson, 1977). Nevertheless as Keenoy argues, in Legge's analytical deconstruction of HRM discourse, she chooses not to pursue these distinctions but collapses them into "rhetoric" and "reality" in which "hard" and "soft" versions or "models" of HRM are treated as more or less mutually exclusive. This position is reinforced by drawing attention to Sisson's work (1994) that shows how the rhetoric of the HRM organisation may be used to mask the "hard reality" of managerial prerogative in the service of capitalism (page 314), for example;

Rhetoric	**Reality (Sisson, 1994 :15)**
Customer first	Market forces supreme
Total quality management	Doing more with less
Lean production	Mean production
Flexibility	Management "can do" what it wants
Core and periphery	Reducing the organisations' commitments
Devolution / delayering	Reducing the number of middle managers
Down-sizing / right sizing	Redundancy
New working patterns	Part-time instead of full-time jobs
Empowerment	Making someone else take the risk and responsibility
Training and development	Manipulation
Employability	No employment security
Recognising contribution of the individual	*Undermining the trade union and collective bargaining*
Teamworking	Reducing the individual's discretion

The structuralist perspective that dominates such debate about the rhetoric and reality of HRM fails to explain the emergent nature of the phenomenon, nor helps the researcher develop insights into ways in which both economic *and* humanist concerns are managed at the workplace. The more recent "bundles" debate similarly engages in either/or thinking about the nature of HRM; "High commitment management (HCM) is characterised by the use of such personnel practices as information dissemination, problem-solving groups, minimal status differences, job flexibility, and teamworking; but more importantly, so its architects argue, it entails using them in combination. Moreover, underlying their use is assumed to be a commitment on the part of employers to their employees based on an underlying conception of them as assets or resources to be developed *rather than* (emphasis added) as disposable factors of production" (Wood and de Menzies, 1998: 486).

HRM and the management of meaning

Discourse analysis provides a fruitful source of inquiry into the constitutive nature and ambiguity of HRM, although the former issue remains inadequately explored from a discursive perspective. A clearer understanding has developed within the management literature of the ideological nature of HRM reflecting a growing concern amongst analysts with its role in the manipulation of meaning at the workplace (for example; McCabe,1996; Hallier and Leopold, 1996; Kamoche 1995a, Watson 1994). Characterised by the use of metaphors and symbolic language, HRM discourse has been shown to have an important influence on people's perceptions of organisational reality (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992). For example Keenoy and Anthony present examples of ways in which a series of metaphors provided by HRM discourse can be used in legitimising managerial action, and masking contradictions associated with "hard" and "soft" management practices during periods of transformational change. Two interrelated processes accommodate these contradictions.

The first relates to managing people's perceptions about business imperatives. On the one hand the metaphor of the free market can be used to distance managerial responsibility from managerial action at a time of job losses and redundancies. On the other, language associated with mutuality and consensus can be used to place

responsibility on employees as well as management for the success of the business. This encourages acceptance of "tough love", having to sacrifice jobs in order that the business can survive.

Secondly, the unitarist language of HRM can be used to downplay the harsh outcomes of many change programmes. Terms such as "rationalisation" and "downsizing" for example serve two purposes. At organisational level, they serve to protect the public relations image of the company. At the macro level, they serve to "sterilise the reality of free market forces" (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992: 242).

More recent studies by McCabe (1996), Hallier and Leopold (1996) and Kamoche (1995a), provide further examples of the power of HRM discourse to manipulate meaning and to create common identities and common interests at the workplace. Kamoche's work highlights not only the importance of rhetoric but also the role of "interaction strategies" in social control (van Dijk, 1998: 273). Emphasis is placed on ways in which senior managers may combine plain speaking with the use of rhetoric in order to mask differences of interest between management and workers. Drawing upon the work of Parkin (Parkin, 1975) plain speaking is defined as "the communication of clear and lucid information in which there is no room for ambiguity" (Kamoche, 1995a: 377). Case study evidence is presented to show how senior management within a car-manufacturing organisation used these different forms of language in order to generate commitment to new working practices. Influenced by the work of Berg (1986), Kamoche shows how the metaphor of teamworking was used to influence how "real" the work team was perceived to be, the legitimacy of teamworking, and levels of commitment to it. The metaphor is described " as a totemic device created by organisational members in everyday life" in that it fosters shared identities and meanings (Kamoche, 1995a: 367). Having generated emotional attachment to teamworking, management subsequently prescribed the "acceptable" forms of behaviour in plain language.

Foucauldian analyses of HRM

Evidence of new forms of ideological control (cultural hegemony) of the kind noted above has raised questions about the ethics of HRM (Knights and Willmott, 1987, 1995; Willmott 1993; Alvesson, 1994; Knights and McCabe, 1999; Dawson and Webb, 1989; Barker, 1993) and led to a growing interest within the HRM literature in a Foucauldian understanding of organisations and the concept of disciplinary power[17] (for example McKinlay and Starkey (1998), Townley (1994, 1998), Deetz (1998).

In this treatment of HRM, power resides in discourse, "not through dominant coalitions, but through the way discursive practices like discipline and surveillance become normalised in social interactions" (Putnam et al., 1999: 144). Townley's Foucauldian analysis of HRM examines the process by which such disciplinary power is created (1994, 1998). The individual is seen to be an object of knowledge and power that is *actively* produced through the discourse of HRM, rather than a " self-evident identity, comprising personality, needs, attitudes, motivations and so on" (1998: 100). HRM mechanisms are designed to constitute individuals as objects, making them "knowable" by transcribing work activity into a standardised and manageable format. This is done through the use of job analysis, job evaluation, selection procedures and performance appraisal. Used to measure both physical and subjective dimensions of labour, these techniques capture individuals within a form of "gaze which serves to render actions, behaviour, and even thoughts, knowable" (1998:194).

Among the more recent HRM initiatives is the use of competency frameworks that are increasingly being used to form the basis of an integrated HRM system (Boam and Sparrow, 1992; Boyatzis, 1992). These provide a framework by which individuals engage in self-examination that has been likened by Townley (1998) and Holmes (1995) to the notion of "confession" presented by Foucault (1977, 1980). This is a ritual of discourse which acts not only to make individuals knowable, but to "constitute the subject in terms of providing an aspect of identity" (Townley 1998: 203). While this

[17] From this perspective the discourse and practices of HRM are observed as having the potential to create a "panoptic organisation" in which the actions of all its members are open to critical scrutiny, comparison and modification. This allows for the operation of "disciplinary power" in which the threat of constant observation leads to internalization and reduces the need for discipline (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998).

self- assessment appears to be "empowering", in reality this is an illusion. Rather, confession "draws the individual more into the domain of power established by the discourse" (Holmes 1995: 42).

Such seemingly mundane techniques of HRM are thus viewed as providing a "technology of power" (Townley, 1998; du Gay and Salaman, 1996). Emphasis is placed on concepts of rationality, measurement and grading that in Marshak's terms can be described as the "tool-talk" of HRM (Marshak, 1998). Drawing upon Foucault's argument that power is not simply repressive, but is positive and productive through the constitution of the self in discourse, Townley's portrayal of HRM is informed by a view of power that is positive and creative (Findlay and Newton, 1998). People are seen to willingly engage in a discourse that helps them construct their identities, or sense of "self". Others emphasise the more sinister character of such power relations. Willmott for example calls for more critical analysis of ways in which the language of HRM is used (within the "excellent" company) to; "manufacture consensus" in such a way as to "yoke, in totalitarian fashion, the power of self-determination exclusively to the realisation of corporate values" (Willmott, 1993: 526).

From this more critical perspective analysts provide examples of ways in which "excellent companies" make it difficult for the employee to express attitudes inconsistent with corporate values, and act as "active participants in the construction and refinement of hegemonic factory regimes" (McKinlay and Taylor, 1998:173; Willmott, 1993; Knights and Willmott, 1987; Deetz, 1998). This form of domination rests in the capacity to close off certain discursive options, leaving the employee to choose loyalty or exit, but not "voice" (presence of active resistance to consent processes, Deetz, 1998:159).

Nissan is a well known example of how HRM practices, combined with principles of just-in-time manufacturing techniques may enhance disciplinary or hegemonic power of this kind (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992; Garrahan and Stewart, 1991; Legge, 1995b; Delbridge and Turnbull, 1992). However while case examples like Nissan highlight the potential of HRM to reconstruct worker identity and the nature of the employment

relationship, as McKinlay et al. observe (1996), there is a tendency to overemphasise the scope and depth of management control or "panoptic reach" of management organisation. Consistent with arguments noted earlier (page 29) about the problematization of discursive closure, they argue that more attention needs to be given to the " unquestioned assumption that management practices are informed by a coherent body of knowledge", and to the ability for employees to resist techniques used to manage meaning and develop disciplinary power (McKinlay and Taylor, 1996: 298; McKinlay and Starkey, 1998). These issues are addressed more fully in the following section and points to a gap in the literature of longitudinal studies that have explored the intertextuality of HRM that would allow for a more sophisticated critique of HRM, organisational context and processes of change.

Limits to hegemonic control: expanding inquiry into the textuality of HRM

A growing number of analysts have begun to address a gap in the literature on what people who have actually experienced HRM think and feel about it, although this is dominated by attitude surveys that provide little scope for analysis at the level of meaning (for example; Mabey et al., 1998 a,b; Guest, 1999a; Cully et al.,1999).

Examples of case designs that provide a more critical treatment of the discursive nature of HRM, revealing issues of employee resistance and micro-politics amongst managers include: Collins, 1999; Watson, 1994; McKinlay and Taylor, 1996; McKinlay and Starkey, 1998; Kerfoot and Knights, 1992; Pollert, 1996 and Scott, 1994). Collins' work draws upon Fucini et al. and Graham's analysis of employee involvement initiatives within two US automobile plants (Fucini and Fucini, 1990; Graham, 1994). He describes how managers within each of the plants created a particular and self interested discourse of empowerment by closing off competing definitions and thereby constructed a "set overlap" between separate and competing realities (Collins, 1999: 213).

Consistent with evidence presented in Mabey et al.'s collection of case studies (1998a), he suggests two reasons why this process of discursive closure may be relatively easy during the early implementation of change. One reason is that it may be difficult for employees to resist attractive promises of greater discretion and more responsibility.

The second, is that employees are unlikely to be able to challenge new concepts introduced by management until they are repeated in their own concrete experiences.

Collins demonstrates how discursive closure became increasingly difficult to sustain as employee involvement was put into practice and employees soon generated new and competing images of reality as the contradictions inherent within the practice of HRM became evident. His analysis of the subsequent "dynamic of diminishing overlap and declining interest space", highlights the limits and fragility of culture control strategies in which managers seek to craft and share a common language with colleagues and subordinates. These findings are consistent with McKinlay et al.'s case study analyses of change within an American owned site in the UK that provides a rich account of ways in which subordinates may resist culture control strategies (McKinlay and Taylor, 1996; McKinlay and Starkey, 1998). The organisation (SiliCon), a manufacturer of mobile phones, acted as a testing ground for the establishment of the most innovative HRM practices yet attempted within the company and centred on the establishment of self directed manufacturing teams. The introduction of a peer review system was the cornerstone of the organisation's teamworking regime, geared towards the development of mutual surveillance and control, holding the promise of " maximum surveillance at minimum costs".

In practice employees refused to endorse the kind of team discipline intended by management, and created a variety of methods to subvert this, including the tacit trading of monthly scores, and shunning the "space cadets" who were prepared to comply with the system. Equalised scoring became the norm across all teams, and effectively destroyed team-surveillance and control. The result was the application of more traditional sources of "sovereign" power - peer review was made compulsory and team scoring automated to allow more effective monitoring of its implementation.

McKinlay and Taylor conclude that the kind of self-subordination implied by a Foucauldian analysis of HRM offered by writers such Townley (1993), overstates the totalising effect and permanence of corporate discourse and ideologies. They argue that in practice managers are typically reacting to changes in their environment, making it

difficult to develop a shared language and long term strategic approach to HRM. For example, as managers at SiliCon faced increasing resistance from the shop floor they were met with growing production pressures that lessened their attachment to "the purity of the original team idea" and the time to develop a coherent body of knowledge about the dynamics of teamworking (McKinlay and Taylor, 1998: 188).

The above arguments point to the need for a critical examination of micro-politics within the managerial group and which extant research has shown can have an important influence on management motives for change (Ahlstrand, 1990), and support from first line managers (Denham et al., 1997; Cunningham and Hyman, 1995; Fenton-O'Creevy and Nicholson, 1994; Thomas and Dunkerley, 1999). These issues are central to Watson's ethnographic study of managerial work within a telecommunications factory (Watson, 1994, 1995a, 1995b). Building upon the work of Giddens (1984) and Knights and Morgan (1990) Watson draws attention to the power relations inherent in organisational discourse, and is concerned with the various ways in which managers "both shape themselves and shape their organisation through processes of exchange" (Watson, 1994: 28).

Processes of exchange include that of information, favours, material and symbolic sources, and language is described as central to this process of negotiating reality with others. He explains that "managing through culture" within ZTC centred on attempts by managers to establish a new discourse and discursive closure but that management in this sense is not described as a unified body imposing a new language on non-managers. Rather, it was more a matter of;" some managers who have embraced the newer rhetorics endeavouring to spread these among all managers and, through them, among all employees" (Watson, 1994: 115).

Watson's analysis reveals the paradoxical nature of management and to tensions between differences in orientations and interests of managers and the top team. These were manifested in "official" and "unofficial" cultures that had their own competing

discourses[18]. The former was characterised as an empowerment, skills and growth (or HRM) discourse. The unofficial culture involved "an oddly confused mixture of this discourse with a rival "control, jobs and costs" discourse (control discourse)". These discourses represented particular ways of constituting organisational "reality "and are shown to have a significant effect upon processes of change. Despite efforts by senior managers to establish a " winning culture" reflected in the discourse of HRM, there was continuing resistance to language reform. A "them and us" relationship remained between management and the workforce, as well as tensions and conflicts between personnel and line managers.

The clashes in discourses at ZTC should not Watson argues, be dismissed as simply an organisation's management failing to be consistent in pursuing HRM. However well HRM policies are implemented, or powerful a particular ideology at any moment, "this has to cope with the deeper conflicts and contradictions underlying the type of society and economy which they are a part" (Watson, 1994: 220). Watson is referring here to the tensions and contradictions characterising employment relations grounded in capitalism, and analysed in his earlier work (Watson, 1977, 1986) and by Legge (1989, 1995b). Employment strategies are shown to be inevitably caught up in aspects of management that are concerned with balancing the effective control of employee behaviour, and expectations of autonomy implicit in the notion of "free labour".

Watson's conclusions highlight the significance of studying the inherent ambiguity of HRM discourse and the dialectical relationship between this dynamic and the macro and micro contexts within which the discourse is constituted. Emphasis placed upon the plurality of meaning also suggests the need to examine not only the dynamic interplay between co-existing discourses such as those highlighted by Watson, but also struggles for meaning *within* a particular discourse. For example the discourse of HRM can be "read" as the synonym of personnel management, techniques of personnel management, a "hard" and more business-oriented approach, or a "soft" and humanistic philosophy on people management (Storey, 1992).

[18] Official culture includes the systems of meanings, values and norms espoused by the dominant managerial coalition. Unofficial culture(s) comprised systems of meanings, values and norms actually prevailing in the organisation.

As Oswick et al. observe, while such diversity of interpretation could be extended in an attempt to tease out a "singular" discursive meaning, an examination of the "plurivocal" nature of managerial discourses might hold more potential to the researcher on examining the nature of HRM (Oswick et al., 1997: 5). From this viewpoint the discourse of HRM is constituted and reconstituted as a consequence of struggle and resistance between competing stakeholders within the organisation. An example of such struggle is provided by Knights and McCabe's case study evidence of Total Quality Management within a UK retail bank (Knights and McCabe, 1999). The authors conclude that power relations between managers within its retail banking and mortgage applications businesses did not only constitute TQM, but that TQM was itself a vehicle for struggle between competing groups and individuals.

The above findings resonate with increasing interest expressed by academics about the complex nature and viability of change initiatives undertaken in the guise of "HRM" (Oswick et al., 1997). Such initiatives largely depend on the mobilisation of discursive resources to "manage meaning", yet the contradiction inherent in HRM discourse creates complex multiple meanings and sources of resistance to leader generated cultures. It means that while dominant elites can exert some degree of hegemonic (discursive) control subordinates remain able to "carve out spheres of interpretative autonomy which distance them from mind games of leaders" (Bryman, 1999: 360).

As a mode of analysis, examination of the intertextuality of HRM-based change could offer important historical and contemporary evidence of this dynamic at the level of the firm since the text is a site "where critical activity, ethical consciousness and even political intervention can begin" (Linstead, 1999: 3). The following section places these issues within the wider societal context within which the discourse of HRM continues to evolve.

2.3.5 HRM and the wider organisational context

Those macro structures that have been shown to be important in the early emergence of the HRM root metaphor since the mid-1980s are highlighted in table 2.6 on the next page. It points to a purported shift in management thinking about people issues as corporations faced increasing competition and looked towards more customer focused business strategies. These imperatives were typically translated into new ideas about continuous improvement, a growing awareness of the strategic importance of human resources and interest in normative prescriptions of HRM.

Union responses to HRM initiatives have been influenced by a significant reduction in their power and influence within the UK (at macro and micro levels), particular union interpretations of new management policies and the way they have been introduced (Bacon and Storey, 1996).[19]

In addition to the cultural, political and economic influences upon the emergence of HRM noted in table 2.6, there are a number of distinctive features of personnel/HR practice within the UK which typically constrain its development and which are associated with a set of attitudes and behaviours defined as "short-termism": the subordination of HRM strategies and plans to fluctuations in business requirements (Storey and Sisson, 1993; Sisson, 1994; Marchington, 1995; Hallier and Leopold, 1996; Blyton and Morris, 1992).

[19] Responses have ranged from "defensive opposition", to conciliatory approaches clustered under the rubric of the "new realism" that display a blend of tactics that address both the growing needs of the individual member as well as collective interests as the HRM agenda grows and develops. The latter include attempts to maintain and extend collective bargaining procedures, and are associated with the notion of "social partnership" voiced by the TUC (TUC 1994; Martinez Lucio and Weston, 1992; Bacon and Storey, 1996).

Table 2.6: Wider organisational context and the emergence of HRM

Experience of competitive markets and the "discovery" of HRM

The emergence of HRM has been linked to the experience of increasing international competition within the UK that has encouraged managers to look for new sources of competitive advantage. Interest grew in the models of HRM emerging from US business schools (Guest, 1987; Beaumont, 1992a), popular management texts produced by a small group of influential writers, [20] and the practices of successful Japanese businesses well known for their distinctive approach to labour relations (Storey, 1992).

Societal values

Analysts have argued that the concepts of HRM such as quality, competitive advantage, flexibility and empowerment are a constitutive element of ideological values that emerged during the Regan and Thatcher administrations in the 1980s (Du Gay and Salaman, 1998; Pollert, 1988). Within the UK, government employment policies centred round the notion of the "enterprise culture" which gave primacy to the marketplace and the role of the individual, providing an important backdrop within which the language of HRM has been able to evolve. Moreover, the more popular management literature was grounded in a set of beliefs and values that continue to appeal fundamentally to managers (Alvesson, 1990 cited by Clarke et al., 1998: 2). As Clark and Salaman observe, popular texts provide tales of heroic organisational turn - rounds in which managers are the "heroes or heroines" who make success possible (Clarke and Salaman, 1997, Clarke et al., 1998: 3)

Decline in the power of trade unions

Linked with the above, changes in the political, legal and business environment since 1979, led to a decline in the power base of trade unions within UK and paved the way for employer agendas that were framed by the emergent discourse of HRM (Storey, 1992; Guest, 1987; Ackers, Smith and Smith, 1996). The concept of free enterprise promoted by the Thatcher administration made few if any allowances for the traditional collectivism of earlier decades (MacInnes, 1987; Towers, 1992; Guest, 1996). It led to a series of employment laws that progressively restricted workers ability to take industrial action, offered less support for the extension of collective bargaining, and continual reforms in public sector industrial relations offered as "good practice" to the private sector. Outcomes included the dismantling of Whitley style bargaining arrangements, introduction of a raft of HRM style practices together with deregulation and privatisation measures that posed serious threats to the traditional role of trade unions within the sector. (Morris, 1989; Bailey, 1996; Kessler and Bayliss, 1995; Beaumont, 1992b; Winchester and Bach, 1995; Storey, 1995)

Changes in the labour market also contributed to a weakened power base of trade unions. Sectors in which trade unionism was traditionally strong experienced a sharp decline, including coal, steel and shipbuilding, and in manufacturing generally (MacInnes, 1987 Millward and Stevens 1986; Millward et al., 1992; Kessler and Bayliss, 1995). An increase in the number of small businesses and rise in new industries of computers, microelectronics and information technology in which union recognition is less likely, compounded these trends (Beaumont, 1995; Basset, 1986).

[20] Examples of the more popular management texts include "In Search of excellence" (Peters and Waterman, 1982) and "A Passion For Excellence" (Peters and Austin, 1985).

Drawing upon the work of Kochan and Dyer (1992) Sisson (1994) explains that short-termism as a pattern of management behaviour, is embedded in structures that include the legal framework, the patterns of association among employers and the relationship between employers and institutional investors. He observes that Britain's industrial relations regime has traditionally been voluntary, allowing for the relationship to develop between management and trade unions according to its "own informal logic" (1994: 20) and the provision for vocational training to be in the hands of employers and employees. Trends towards the decentralisation of collective bargaining coupled with the absence of a comprehensive legal framework has led to a highly diversified set of employment arrangements within the UK characterised by the ad hoc development of personnel policy and a low status personnel function.

These characteristics have important implications in the adoption of corporate and business strategy, and play a significant role in shaping human resource choices made at corporate and local levels. HRM strategy has shown to be typically downstream to "first" and "second" order corporate strategies, consistent with the much documented "Cinderella" status of the HRM function and dominance of an "accountancy logic" which places emphasis on maintaining dividends and delivering "short term" financial results (Sisson, 1994; Legge, 1978; Tyson and Fell, 1986; Monks, 1992, 1994; Storey, 1992; Watson, 1977).[21]

Sisson argues that the social structures in which short-termism is embedded are deeply rooted within the UK and difficult to change, and that there is therefore no simple model of factors that support or constitute the development of HRM (Sisson, 1994:11). The endemic nature of this pattern of behaviour is reflected in recent survey evidence of British managers which suggests that a key reason for the failure of HRM and quality initiatives within the UK is the lack of preparedness for managers to commit resources required to sustain HRM practices in the long term (IRS Employment Trends, 1993). This in part explains the much documented "managerial fatigue" in the protracted

[21] As Sisson observes, the overriding importance of such institutions as investment trusts and pension funds, plus the threat of takeover by large conglomerates anxious to maintain the price/earnings ratio of their shares, has put considerable pressure on maintaining dividends and delivering "short-term" financial results (page 21).

process of implementing new initiatives, and the switching of resources into other areas (Marchington, 1995; Singh, 1992). As a result senior management priorities and HRM philosophies can easily alter and not only be competing over time but shifting over time (Mueller, 1996; Marchington, 1995). Indeed corporate transformations may be influenced as much by the "cognitive arena" or "sector recipe" within which corporate and business managers identify, as they are to more "objective" environmental conditions (Child and Smith, 1987).[22] These recipes or "dominant logics", have been described as the collective mind set and which have been shown to shape the way managers make sense of actions and circumstances outside the firm (Whipp, 1999; Gunnigle and Morley, 1998).

While analysts have generated insights into ways in which HRM at the level of the firm is intertwined with external structures there remains only a limited understanding about the dynamic and dialectical nature of this relationship. There is a clear gap in the research literature that has examined in any depth the dynamic nature of HRM as strategic change unfolds at the level of the firm, which depends on a multi-paradigmatic and multi-level analysis of change.

Linking micro-and macro- contexts of change and the construction of HRM

Pettigrew's seminal work provides a useful example of a multi-level analysis of strategic change (Pettigrew, 1985, 1987, 1988; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991, 1993; Hendry and Pettigrew, 1986, 1990a,b). Emphasis is placed on identifying and linking macro and micro-socio political factors in order to capture the complex relationship between continuity and change, and between constraints and choice. Criticising the overly deterministic view of the environment portrayed by contingency theory, Pettigrew argues that while the social context serves to constrain managerial choice and behaviour, it does accord them some choice and manoeuvre. Consistent with Gidden's structuration theory noted earlier (page 20), he posits that the internal and external forces of change can be

[22] Child and Smith define the cognitive arena as a set of " distinctive corporate languages, constructs and frameworks, all of which have an important influence on the evolvement of learning paths in the sector" (Whipp and Clark, 1986: 27, cited by Child and Smith, 1987: 569).

mobilised either by dominant or aspiring coalitions to legitimise new definitions and change strategies. From this perspective, the role of management is not to plan change, but rather to create an appropriate "learning environment" that encourages employees to be aware of the need for change and change their behaviour, actions or culture to implement it.

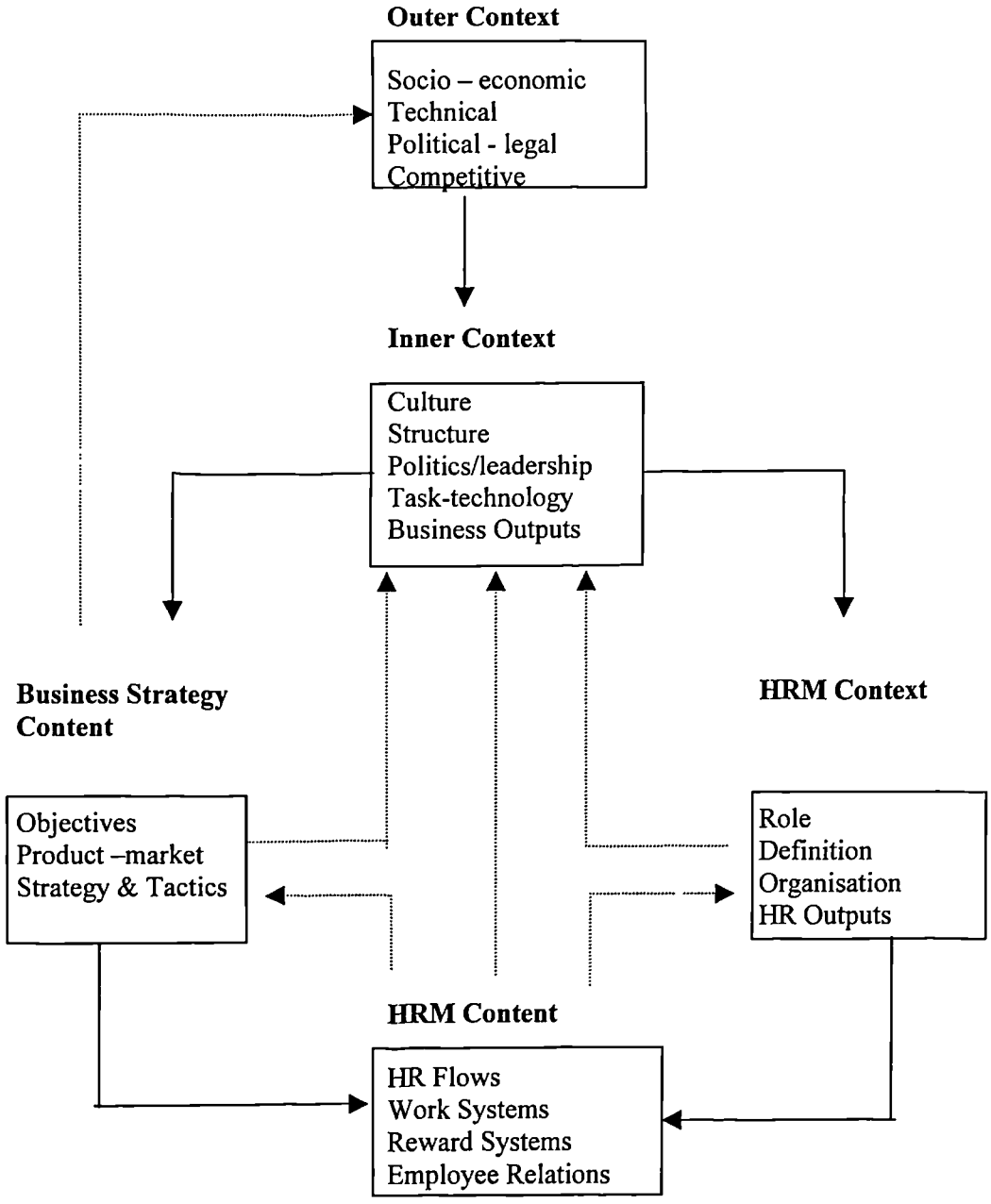
A model of strategic change is developed which draws connections between HRM, business strategy and the external organisational context (Hendry and Pettigrew 1990b). While it is recognised that HRM should be judged against criteria of appropriateness (alignment between business and HR strategies) and coherence (consistency of HR policies and practices), they eschew the mechanistic notion of "fit" advocated in normative models of HRM. It is argued that, given the emergent nature of business strategy and development of HR policies, the criteria of coherence and appropriateness are "only ever provisionally attained".

The conceptual framework, shown on the next page, depicts an outer environmental and inner organisational context, business strategy and HRM as "content" responses, and a series of processes that link these. The solid arrows indicate direct processes that mediate the development of strategy, and the broken arrows feedback loops. The environment is interpreted through the lens of organisational culture and structure, the positioning of the business in terms of its task-technology commitments, and by present business performance.

The model has two important features. Firstly, it recognises that structure, culture and HRM change can precede strategy. HRM is not simply reactive to strategy, but contributes to it through the development of culture as well as the frames of reference of those managers who make strategy. Secondly the non-linear character of strategy formulation and implementation processes is stressed; Strategic HRM often adheres to long time scales and emphasis is placed on the process of HRM change which is regarded as significant as its content. What is not clear in Pettigrew's work, is how the HR system is mediated by the HR function and/or line managers, nor how this alters through time. More emphasis could be placed on processes by which HRM systems are

"translated" into HRM practices and the ongoing creation and re-creation of HRM discourse and practice (This matter is examined further in chapter six).

Figure 2.2: Strategic change and human resource management (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1990b: 26)



Tyson's more recent work (1995, 1997) elaborates on the processual and contextualist approach. Based on case study findings of top performing companies within the UK, he presents a general theory of strategic HRM that demonstrates the central importance of

HRM processes to the emergence of shared definitions at the workplace. His framework, shown in figure 2.3, identifies three levels of analysis, societal, organisational and "sentinel" (level of individual perception and cognition). The aim is to show how "HRM as an activity fulfils an interpretive role at the organisational level of analysis" (Tyson, 1997: 281).

The societal-level variables interact with those at the organisational level and are broadly similar to those identified by Pettigrew and others (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Doz and Prahalad, 1988). It is at the organisational level that HRM is seen to become an important medium for the development of shared meanings across the three levels of analysis; "The process (human resource strategy) is interpretive at the level of the organisation, where strategic human resource management activities are engaged in re-interpreting societal influences and reconciling senior management meanings within the perceptions of organisation members and in accordance with the variables within the organisation" (Tyson, 1997: 288).

Figure 2.3 Tyson's theory of HRM: Three levels of analysis (Tyson 1997: 283)

SOCIETAL LEVEL VARIABLES

Market size & product type	State of technology	Level of unemployment in specific labour markets	Climate of state activity on employment	Bargaining history and methods between employers & trade unions in specific industry

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL: INTERVENING VARIABLES

Market share	Investment policies	Personnel role: expressed in policies & actions	Management ideologies	Decision-making habits/rules

SENTIENT LEVEL: PERCEPTIONS OF WORK PEOPLE

Deriving from group norms, conceptions of justice, fairness and reciprocity

Tyson maintains that the language and practice of HRM are used by senior managers to interpret societal level variables into organisational choices, thus determining those issues that are perceived to be "strategic". In this sense HRM frames the development of "strategic conversations" from which new meanings emerge and which are negotiated and reinterpreted at the sentient level; " Those involved in this process are conscious that their strategic actions require a search for meaning, and that the strategy process is an interpersonal reinterpretation of what " works" and is acceptable, within the perceptions of all those powerful enough to contribute to the debate in the organisation" (Tyson 1997: 285).

For Tyson, the "strategic value" of HRM thus lies in its potential to generate cultural integration. HRM systems and practices provide a "meaning structure" that allows managers from different disciplines and different levels of strategic decision making to the shopfloor, to develop a common language of change by using the "tradable currency of symbolic words and actions". An example is given of one large privatised organisation in which emergent HRM systems and practices acted as a medium through which the concept of empowerment was "continuously the process of negotiation" (Tyson, 1997: 286) amongst organisation members.

Tyson calls for further research that can develop understanding of how and why HRM practices act as an important medium for exchanging ideas and developing shared understandings at the level of the firm. Implicit in this view is an integrationist perspective that assumes that the management elite can be more or less in control over both the content of text and the local context by which texts are produced and interpreted. More attention could be given to the pluralist nature of managerial life and to different levels of management activity as change strategies emerge and become realised and which carry competing discourses as well as multiple meanings of the HRM discourse.

The following chapter provides a methodology for investigating this dynamic, drawing upon Fombrum et al.'s observations on three levels of managerial work (strategic, managerial and operational) (Fombrum et al., 1984: 43). Whereas their functionalist

model of the "human resource cycle" provides an overly rationalistic view of how strategy is formed and implemented it does provide a useful analysis of different levels of managerial work. For the purposes of this present study, this has been modified to illustrate different levels of discursive activity at which HRM can be articulated;

> *Strategic*: the development of an organisational vision and strategic intent.
>
> *Managerial:* development of "top down" and "bottom up" HR strategies and gaining necessary resources and support to implement new policy initiatives.
>
> *Operational:* delivery of HR strategies and day to day management of change.

It is explained in the next chapter that applying the above framework to an intertextual analysis of HRM-based change allows for a more critical examination of the interplay between processes of text production and interpretation amongst managers at different levels and functions to the shopfloor. Particular attention will be given to exploring the constant movement of meaning as managers attempt to effect strategic change and the reciprocity between discursive practices associated with the three levels at which HRM is articulated.

3 Chapter Three: Research design and introduction to each case study

This chapter falls into three sections. The first outlines assumptions underpinning the choice of methods used in this study and in so doing provides a rationale for using Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis as guiding principles underpinning the research design (Fairclough 1992, 1995). The second section outlines the research design and methods adopted in the study. This includes a discourse analysis of semi-structured interviews and documentary material, and participant observation. The final section introduces each of the two case studies, outlining key differences and similarities of context within which the language and practice of HRM emerged.

3.1 Rationale for the adoption of a discourse-analytic approach

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between the emergent discourse of HRM and the practice of organisational change. It is based on the assumption that the world as we know and understand it is socially constructed, rather than a given "objective" reality separate from ourselves, and that discourse is central to processes of social construction. As Gergen observes, "What we call knowledge accounts of the world (including ourselves) are essentially discursive", and a product of social interaction rather than spontaneously emerging as a product of individual cognition (Gergen, 1998: viii). Priority is thus given to *social* processes in shaping what is taken to be knowledge and understanding of the "self" and organisation.

When considered from this viewpoint a different perspective on the nature of organisation is needed than that found in mainstream management research, which relies on structuralist approaches (Ford, 1999; Oswick et al., 1997). Placing language as central to the social construction of reality, a discourse-analytic perspective is adopted that allows for more sophisticated treatment of the creation of meaning and the role of discourse in sense making. Importantly, discourse analysis is more sensitive than conventional research techniques to an examination of the " complex, ambiguous and often paradoxical nature of management" (Oswick et al., 1997: 4), as demonstrated by

Watson's ethnographic account of change within a telecommunications factory (Watson, 1994, 1995a,b).

Potter and Wetherell observe that the label "discourse analysis" has been applied in very different ways in social science research, including methods concerned with speech act theory, a more psychologically oriented focus on discourse processes, a concern with the sociology of social scientific knowledge, or how practices and the individual subject itself can be understood as produced through the workings of discourse (Potter and Wetherell 1994b : 47). This study builds upon the latter kind of work but also attempts to integrate this with some ideas from conversational analysis that point to the role of speech acts (Ford 1995) and "interaction strategies" in processes of social control (van Dijk, 1998: 273) .

The concern of this present study is to expand such inquiry into the discursive nature of organisational change in order to generate insight into the ambivalence of HRM discourse and how this both shapes and is shaped by processes of social construction amongst organisational participants. The term "conversation" will be used as a metaphor to signify the collaborative, discursive and dynamic nature of HRM and will refer to verbal, visual and written interactions and social practices occurring at strategic, managerial and operational levels of management as shown below.

This differentiation between levels of management activity at which HRM is articulated builds on Fombrum et al's work (1984) noted in chapter two, but draws upon the analytic metaphor of organization as inter-text (Taylor, 1999), rather than treating organisations as objects or entities. The three levels of "conversations" are viewed as interdependent and defined as follows:

> ***Strategic conversations:*** refers to managerial decisions and actions centred round the development of an organisational vision and strategic intent.
>
> ***Managerial conversations*:** are concerned with the development of "top down" and "bottom up" HR strategies and gaining necessary resources and support to implement new policy initiatives.

Operational conversations: focus on the delivery of HR strategies and day to day management of change. This includes continual refinement of new concepts, working definitions and performance indicators.

3.1.1 Framework of assumptions and concepts

As Watson argues in his discussion of a "pragmatic pluralist approach", analysts should avoid an "anything goes approach" and that; "Any particular study needs to be given theoretical coherence by a framework of assumptions and concepts which has its own integrity" (1997:6). On this basis, a set of sensitising concepts are presented below[23] within which the social practice of HRM can be examined. At the same time it is recognised that the researcher can be criticised for presenting too well defined a theory to start with, thus selecting her observations to suit that theory. Yet, as Hepburn explains; "if she presents her observations as "objective" descriptions" she equally faces criticism (...) the answer to this problem is obviously to strike a balance between having a research focus which is not inflexible, and make the theory that informs the approach as explicit as possible" (Hepburn 1995:129).

The flow chart on page 67 (see section 3.2) illustrates how such a balance was struck within this present study, emphasising the iterative nature of the research process.

Sensitising concepts: discourse as text, discursive practice and social practice

The approach to discourse undertaken in this study centres on the social position noted above, treating meaning as something that is essentially fluid and negotiated rather than being authored individually. It is recognised that viewing meaning as process rather than absolute presents problems to the analyst in her attempt to draw conclusions from her case studies that are worthwhile to the reader. From a purist social constructionist position (exemplified in Hosking's analysis of the research process, Hosking, 1999), structures are viewed as always provisional and the research process itself may be described as an ongoing relational process of construction. Recognising this issue, Chouliarki and Fairclough note that structures from a social constructionist perspective

[23] Concepts that help the observer to see phenomenon that otherwise would remain invisible or tacit (Doving, 1996: 187).

are viewed as always provisional and immediately open to new articulations (Chouliarki and Fairclough, 1999: 125).

They argue that the basic problem with this is that; " it is unable to explain which social forces have greater capacity to effect articulatory changes and why. We need a concept of structure not as provisional but as relative permanent – open to change but with relative stability". The authors go on to describe an epistemology that is described as a form of "consrtuctivist structuralism" in that; "it is oriented to relational systems which constitute relative permanencies within practices; it is constructivist in that it is concerned to explicate how these systems are produced and transformed in social action. Social systems are both the precondition of social action and the product of social action" (p32).

Chouliaraki and Fairclough's thesis on "rethinking critical discourse analysis" adopts a more structuralist position than that recognised in this present study, but their arguments nevertheless draw important attention to the mutual dependence of structure and agency. Nexus between the two is central to Gidden's arguments about social life and inform the ontological position taken in this present study. His discussion of the duality of structure does not offer any generalisations about the conditions of reproduction/transformation. Rather, it is to say that; "neither on the level of logic, nor in our practical day-to-day lives, can we step outside the flow of action; whether such action contributes to the most rigid of social institutions or to the most radical forms of social change" (Giddens, 1993: 5).

Giddens argues that social structures are constantly being reproduced and produced in daily practice, but in doing so, people speak of structures in a reified mode in order to make sense of their environments (Giddens: 1993 :132). For example people commonly describe departments and organisations as entities quite separate from themselves and at the same time treat such constructions in a taken for granted fashion. In other words they are treated as objectified social facts and therefore remain relatively stable. This allows the analyst to treat structures as relatively impersonal and in such a way as to

"capture" the essence of them and identify the constraining and enabling features of them (Cohen 1997).

As noted in chapter two, structures are described by Giddens as "systems of generative rules and resources that members draw upon but also thereby change, in their continuous production and reproduction of society" (Giddens, 1976: 127). This sense of structure is not unlike what Chouliarki and Fairclough describe as "social practice" which they define as; "habitualised ways, tied to particular times and places, in which people apply resources (material and symbolic) to act together in the world" (1999: 21). From this perspective discourse is viewed as both a form *and* facet of social practice and treated as "joint action", characterised by a particular thematic content, style and structure. This action component of discourse is evident in both Watson's and du Gay and Salaman's definitions of discourse in which it is argued that discourse should not be reduced to speech/writing alone:

> "A discourse, in this sense, is a connected set of statements, concepts, terms and expressions which constitutes a way of talking or writing about a particular issue, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that issue" (Watson 1994: 113).
>
> "Discourse refers to a group of statements that provides a language for talking about a topic and a way of producing a particular kind of knowledge about that topic" (du Guy and Salaman 1996 : 265 1996: 265).

3.2 Research design

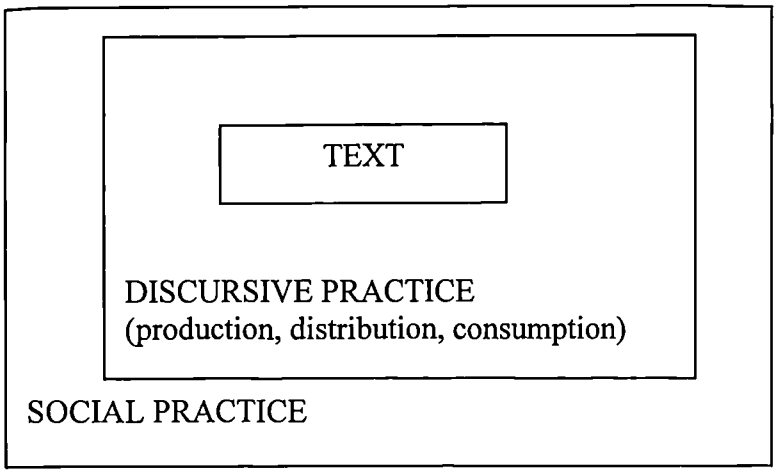
For the purposes of this research the organisation is treated as a form of social practice that is constantly created and recreated through processes of social construction, and language is acknowledged as central to such processes (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998; Musson and Cohen, 1999; Kamoche, 1995a; Watson, 1994). The organisation is viewed as a text(s), created through discourses, and discourse itself treated as a form of social practice rather than a purely individual activity, defined by Fairclough as a "discursive event" (Fairclough, 1992; 1995).

Fairclough explains that treating discourse as a form of social practice has two implications. Firstly, discourse becomes a mode of action as well as a mode of

representation as noted earlier. Secondly it places it in a dialectical relationship with other facets of "the social" (social structures) consistent with Giddens concept of the "duality of structure" . From this perspective discourse is shaped by structures but also contributes to shaping and reshaping them. These structures have various orientations (economic, political, cultural, ideological) and "discourse may be implicated in all of these without any of them being reducible to discourse" (Fairclough, 1992: 626).

Discourse analysis of interviews and documentary material undertaken in this study is based on Fairclough's three dimensional framework illustrated below in which the faciticity of HRM is analysed as simultaneously, a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice.

Figure 3.1 Three-dimensional conception of discourse (Fairclough, 1992: 73)



Text refers to written and spoken language in use, while discursive practices involve the processes by which texts are produced and interpreted. The social practice dimension refers to the institutional and organisational factors surrounding the discursive event and how they might shape the nature of the discursive practice.

3.2.1 Intertextuality as a mode of analysis

This research focuses on how text was produced or interpreted largely amongst the ranks of manager/ supervisor. It is beyond the scope of the research to make a close

study of the change initiatives on the constructions of shopfloor employees. Rather, emphasis is placed on presenting rich descriptions of the perceptions of managers at different levels and functions, about the change process and their efforts to manage it. This required an examination of what discursive resources were drawn upon by change leaders within the realm of people management (recruitment, training and development and so forth) and in what combinations as change unfolded over time.

The concept of intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992; 1995), provides a useful mode of analysis used to highlight relations between contradictory texts and discursive practices that constituted the discourse of HRM within the two case studies. Importantly it allowed me to explore ways in which dominant players introduced new HRM-based texts into the organisation and how these combined and /or competed with existing texts and order of discourse [24]. In this way I was able to learn about the extent to which the discourse of HRM was open to "strategic exploitation" (Fairclough, 1992: 114) by dominant players allowing them to manage the meaning of their subordinates. It is recognised that "strategic exploitation" is not necessarily based on a self-conscious awareness of the manipulation of meaning on the part of these actors. As Fairclough argues, calculation at such a level of detail is perhaps implausible and that; "It is more likely that calculation at a more general level about how to achieve specific communicative objectives with respect to particular audiences leads to unselfconscious adaptations of meaning resources to these higher purposes" (Fairclough, 1995: 114).

Linguistic categories commonly associated with HRM (for example empowerment, and teamworking) are treated as ambiguous concepts that signify a discourse or "root metaphor" (Dunn, 1990: 2) which captures a new "world view" of the employment relationship. Viewing HRM as a root metaphor avoids the danger of assuming that its meaning is exhausted by those who prescribe and describe it (Ezzamel et al., 1996), and allows the analyst to treat the phenomenon as something that is enacted, given meaning and constituted through discursive activity.

[24] Order of discourse refers to the dominant combinations of text types and discursive practices and the relations between them (Fairclough, 1995: 135).

Particular emphasis is placed on the import of metaphors that are characteristic of HRM, and the introduction of HRM-based techniques adopted by change leaders in their attempt to privilege certain themes and issues over others. It was beyond the scope of the research to undertake a linguistic analysis of text in terms of grammar and sentence construction. Rather, textual analysis was organised according to the use of alternative "vocabularies" and their political significance upon the making of meanings and how this came into contention with dominant or "normal" text(s) and discursive practices. Exploration is made of how this dynamic was embedded in larger social structures (for example government policy and language of enterprise), eschewing the tendency for researchers to focus on the production of either macro- or micro-level structures (Schwarzman, 1993; Clegg and Hardy, 1999).

3.2.2 Social practice as context, and associated power relations

Following Pettigrew (1985, 1988, 1995) the study comprises a multi-level or "contextual" analysis of strategic change concerned with the embeddedness of change in local and wider organisational contexts. Context is defined here as those micro-and macro-social structures (or social practices) that are perceived as being important by organisational participants who deploy the metaphor of HRM, or make reference to HRM-based issues without using the term. Focus is placed on how new meanings (texts) are embedded in wider social practices as well as the prevailing order of discourse at local level.

A key consideration of discourse analysis is an examination of how power and its misuse is maintained in language (Hepburn, 1995: 129). This is consistent with a Foucauldian perspective in which power is treated as inherent in social relations and thus embedded in discourse. From this viewpoint it makes more sense to ask how is power exercised through discourse rather than who possesses power (Knights and McCabe, 1999). It is on this basis that the following research questions treat the emergent language of change within the two cases in terms of an exercise of power; of attempted closure of meaning and discursive practices.

It is assumed that an important defining characteristic of organisations is that there is some form of social consensus. While it is recognised that organisations are made up of overlapping sub(counter)-cultures and multiple discourses, for any co-ordinated action to occur there has to be some integrating elements and language common enough for organisational members to operate sufficiently in concert (Watson, 1994). From this perspective a key task of managers is to frame peoples ways of thinking about processes and outcomes of organisational change, and discourse is viewed as an intrinsic aspect of this (Oswick et al., 1997).

The ongoing and problematic nature of such meaning construction is of central concern to this present study. Senior managers' capacity to control meaning at the workplace is treated as situational, depending upon the dynamic interplay between immediate and wider social practices within which they find themselves. In this sense, the research design privileges neither structure nor agency. Rather, they are treated as mutually dependent and social structures seen to depend upon modes of structuration that occur at different levels, including the individual, the group, organisation and the wider societal level.

3.2.3 Choice of research methods and nature of the research process

The choice of research methods provided scope for exploring the *how* of meaning rather than *the* meaning ie tracing the discursive processes by which meanings are created, recreated, maintained and become shared or fragmented. Processes of gathering and analysis of material were highly iterative (figure 3.2, page 66 depicts broad phases of the research process) and bore similarities to the grounded theory approach advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1964). It meant that the research questions/ issues noted below emerged as part of an ongoing interpretation of concepts emerging from literature reviews and case study material, and were written towards the end of the fieldwork period.

Research Questions

Research questions sought to explore the movement to foreclose on the possibility of meaning about teamworking and the interrelationships between immediate and wider discourses and processes of organisational change:

1. What were the visions of change and associated meanings expressed by change instigators?
2. How were new meanings (texts) embedded in the current order of discourse at local level?
3. What was the dynamic interplay (and struggles) between the different levels within which HRM was enacted and given meaning (strategic, managerial and operational)?
4. What is the location of this dynamic vis a vis broadly identifiable "phases" of change within which these processes emerged?

Research Issues

More practical questions adressed the following key issues:

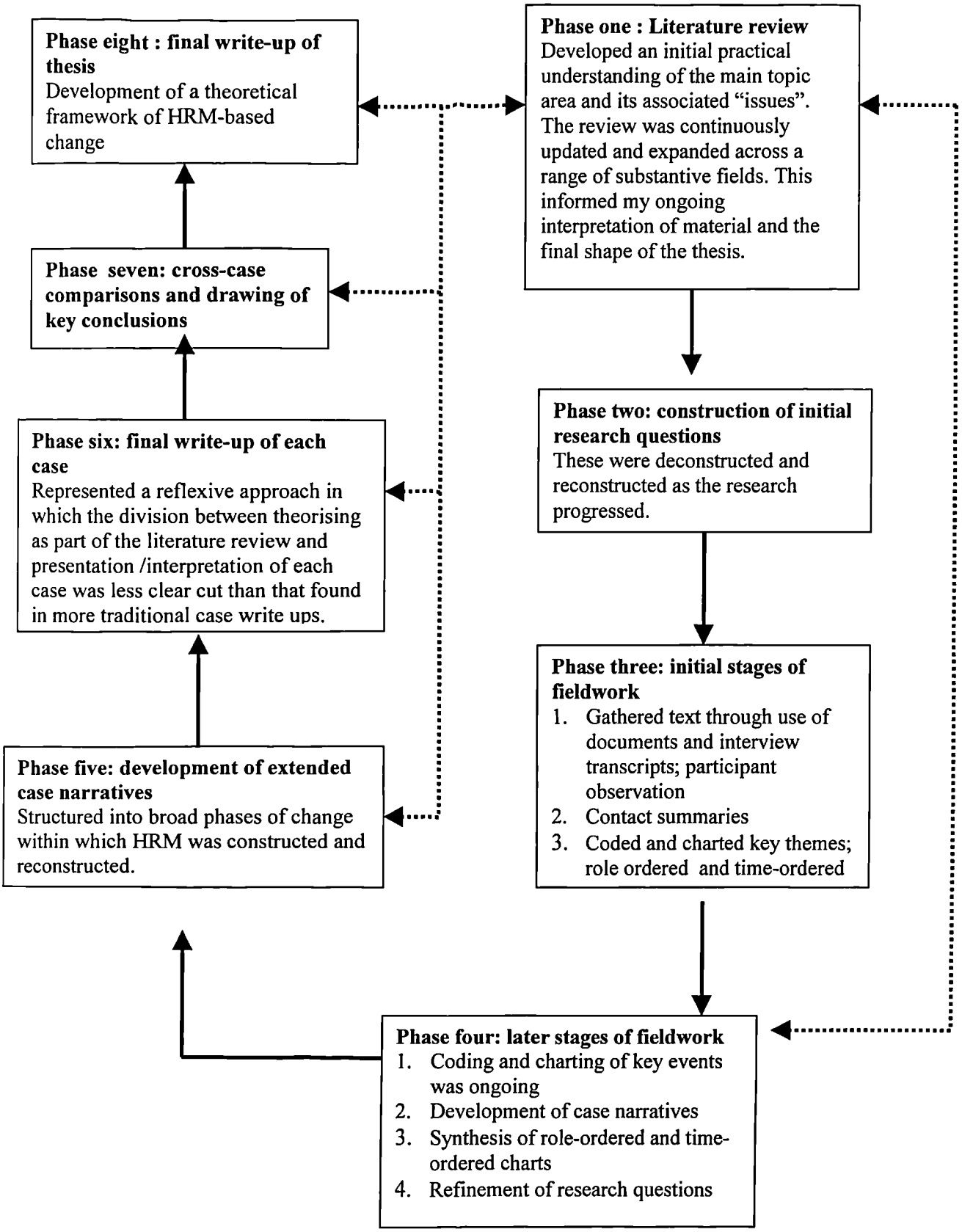
1. What meanings of HRM were emerging amongst instigators of change and why?
2. What was the dominant order of discourse that characterised management practice prior to the change initiative?
3. How were various meaning relations being constructed and presented by change leaders?
4. How and why was it that certain meaning relations entered the text of change and obtained relative dominance while others were subverted?
5. What was the dynamic and complex interplay between hard and soft text types that constituted HRM?
6. What phases or time frames became apparent as organisational change unfolded?
7. What were the interrelationships between these processes and the network of social structures in which change took place?

My research began with broad research questions concerned with the "delivery" of HRM policies. At that time HRM policy statements were treated as somewhat fixed in meaning but their implementation open to political manoeuvring. Focus then shifted to notions of organisational culture and symbolic management, in particular the symbolic role of HRM in strategic change; for example ways in which such practices could be viewed as rites of passage or enhancement (Trice and Beyer (1984) and used to help an organisation move from one phase of change to another (Johnson, 1990).

The interpretative perspective then became a key orienting frame shaping the analytic process, but as fieldwork progressed within the second case study, the perspective was seen as too limiting for two reasons that have been previously highlighted by Westwood (1987). Firstly, while this perspective usefully draws attention to how particular realities are socially produced and maintained within the organisation through norms, rituals and daily routines, there is an avoidance of questions of conflict and coercion in social structures. As noted in chapter two, emphasis is placed on shared meanings and the creation of monolithic organisational cultures. Moreover, language tends to be treated by analysts within this frame as a transporter of meanings rather than creator of meaning (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

Secondly and linked to the above, the interpretive perspective fails to tackle in sufficient depth the contribution of language in the construction and deconstruction of meaning, and to processes of struggle and domination. Watson's work "In search of management" (1994) and Westwood's analysis of the discourse of participation within a chemicals company (1987) provided me with critical new insights into the role of discourse, and sparked off a new train of investigation into the relationship between discourse and organisational life. It was at this stage I became more familiar with Fairclough's work on discourse analysis (1992, 1995), and later Grant et al's (1998) edited text on organisational discourse, allowing me to focus more specifically on the relationship between the emergent discourse of HRM and the practice of organisational change.

Figure 3.2 Flow chart of the research process



3.2.4 Methods- participant observation and discourse analysis

The principal method of research employed in this study was discourse analysis of in-depth interviews and documentary evidence and to a lesser extent participant observation. This included retrospective as well as real time data covering periods of up to five years within each of the cases as shown below.

	Retrospective data	**Real Time data**
Ethicon	Winter 1990/1	December 1993 – January 1995
BP	Autumn 1994	October 1995- January 1997 (Follow up Winter 1998)

The choice of data collection techniques was based on the need to gain in-depth access to the knowledge and meanings of informants (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). This allowed for presentation of "thick description" – particular perceptions of the actors, rather than objectively described complexities of the case (Geertz, 1973, cited by Stake 1995: 42). I was also concerned at choosing protocols that helped me gain credence in the interpretations and meanings presented in the final dissertation. Participant observation and discourse analysis of (loosely structued) interviews and documentary material would, I considered, allow for critical examination of the process of meaning and multiple interpretations rather than the confirmation of a single meaning.

Interviews were therefore designed to gain access to respondent's organisational world – its practices and language use. I recognised that this is difficult and that all interview material must be interpreted in terms of possible script-following accounts. This might include following the "party line", or following the norms and scripts for expression which guide conversation in interview settings (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000). Attempts were made to reduce this problem by developing closer relations with interviewees, through repeat interviews, or getting to meet them in the canteen for interview, rather than in their office/manufacturing area. In addtion, I was able to work towards depth access in the research process by demonstrating knowledge of sensitive issues raised by other respondents at earlier interviews. This is described by Alvesson and Deetz as a process of "drilling" (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

Interviews

Interviews took place at different times as the change process evolved, with some respondents interviewed repeatedly during fieldwork. Managers were asked to describe and discuss events that had led up to the introduction of self-directed teams, as well as current issues associated with the change process.

Initial interviews were held with human resource managers at each site and interviewees chosen through a process of "snowball" and "theoretical sampling" techniques (Bryman and Burgess, 1994). These were based on interpretations of what information about the change process needed to be pursued in greater depth and identification of types of informants who were most likely to possess an "insiders knowledge" of the research domain (Thomas, 1993).

In each of the firms studied, interviews numbered between thirty and forty and took place on site. Interviews were loosely structured, similar to the ethnographic approach described by Schwarzman (1993). They included broad checklists of questions that allowed them to be carried out in an open-ended and non-directive manner, and for me to add emergent themes specific to the organisational context. Aware of how responses are coloured by the identities triggered by language used in the interview, I sought to avoid prematurely fixing a certain position through encouraging more multifaceted accounts before gradually attaining a focus and exploring themes of interest (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 125).

Drawing upon the advice of Patton (1990) interview questions were aimed at :

- background information concerned with identifying characteristics of people being interviewed
- descriptions of experiences, behaviours and actions (informants were encouraged to expand on their experiences using examples)
- interpretations and opinions about what people thought about certain issues
- knowledge and perceptions the respondents had about the change initiative and related issues, including meanings attributed to new metaphors and associated concepts introduced by change leaders.

In addition to individual interviews, a small number of semi-structured focus group interviews were held with shopfloor employees and immediate supervisors. Limited

direction from the interviewer allowed for observation of spontaneous responses and provided insight into participants' natural vocabulary on a topic. The ability to observe interaction on a topic was felt to be particularly important amongst shopfloor workers who might be influenced by perceptions of myself as an "expert" or as someone "working for management". Interviews were only loosely structured, allowing participant interaction amongst themselves to partially replace their interaction with the interviewer.

While focus groups provided a rich source of information, numbers were limited, particularly in the Ethicon case, because of their impracticality. Employees and their immediate supervisors were "tied" to continuous manufacturing processes, making access to them difficult.

All interviews (table 3.1) both individual and focus, were tape-recorded and lasted between one and a half and three hours. I recognised that tape-recording of sensitive information might be difficult, but in practice respondents showed little concern at the use of tapes. This was helped by spending approximately twenty minutes establishing rapport at the beginning of interviews that started with non controversial questions which the interviewees were able to handle easily. In addition, respondents were primarily drawn from the ranks of junior, middle and senior management and were very familiar with the use of tape-recording used as a technique for selection interviewing and /or training purposes. Reassuring interviewees about anonymity was important, and offering to switch off the tape during specific parts of the interview. (Aliases have been given to respondents when referring to them by name).

The different ranks of manager noted in table 3.1 are only loosely defined, and labelled and categorised according to how they were referred to in the organisation. As Watson observes, this approach avoids " pre-judging and to allow whatever key distinctions between levels which might influence thinking and behaviour to be a matter of what would emerge" as the researcher gets to know the organisation (Watson, 1994: 212). The term operational manager will be used as a generic term to refer to middle and

junior "managers" or " team leaders" responsible for managing change on a day to day basis.

As I got to know key respondents on a personal level I became involved in informal discussions with managers that were held in canteens and offices, and also attended some briefing sessions between managers and staff. Although these events comprised only a small part of the overall study, these occasions allowed me to "enter" the daily lives of managers, and helped inform the interpretation of data generated in interview, finding new connections, and shaping future interviews. Importantly, it helped me penetrate and understand common meanings and the "natural language" of different managerial groups, thus reducing the problem of "tacit assumption of understanding" inherent in the research interview [25] (Denzin, 1978, 1984).

[25] Informal discussion helped understanding of terms specific to the organisational community. For example the phrase "town hall meetings" within one organisation referred to briefing sessions held in the business canteen, and was freely used in a taken-for-granted fashion by participants.

Table 3.1 Individual/ focus group informants

At Ethicon management layers totalled six. Within manufacturing this included: "director"; "head of department"; "section head"; "foreman"; "supervisor"; "leading hand". Within cellular operations the foreman position was re-titled "cell group leader" and supervisors became "team leaders".

At BPGR there were five layers in the management hierarchy, in the process of being reduced to four. Within manufacturing this included: "works general manager"; "manufacturing manager", "manufacturing engineer team leaders"; "manufacturing engineers"; "first line managers" (FLM). The FLM position was to be removed to allow manufacturing teams on the shopfloor to assume more administrative and leadership responsibilities.

List of respondents

Ethicon Ltd.	***BP Chemicals (Grangemouth)***
Managing Director	*Works General Manager*
Board of directors	Heads of department
Operations Director	Manager Logistics
Personnel Director	Manager Olefins Manufacturing
Company Secretary	Manager External Relations
Heads of department	Manager Human Resource Management
Operations Manager	Section heads ("Team Leaders")
Head of Resourcing	Project Manager of "One Team"
Head of Development	G4 Area Manufacturing Engineer Team Leader (phase one of change)
Sales Manager	G4 Area Manufacturing Engineer Team Leader (appointed phase two of change)
Middle Managers	Team Leader, Human Resources and Relations
Manager, management development	Team Leader, Training and Development
CFM Project Manager	Operational managers and HR advisors
Operational managers	KG Area : Issue Team Leader (phase 1of change)[26]
Cell Group Leader	KG Area : Issue Team Leader (phase 2 of change)
Manager, Staff Training	G4 Area : Issue Team Leader
Manager, Comp. & Benefits	First Line Manager
Manager of Operations Training	Human Resource Advisor: Management Development.
Manager, Recruitment & Selection	Human Resource Advisor: Information Technology
Shopfloor employees	Human Resource Advisor: Resourcing
Team Leader	Shopfloor employees
Team Leaders (Focus Group:3)	Team Leaders (focus group: three)
Leading Hands (Focus Group : 3)	TGW Convenor
	Process Technicians KG Area (Focus group:4)
	Process Technician G4 Area (Focus group: 4)
	Maint / Process Technicians KG Area (Focus group: 5)

[26] Issue team leaders chaired new task forces established as part of an employee involvement initiative introduced during the change programme, and were drawn from the rank of junior engineer (operational manager).

3.2.5 Discourse analysis of interview transcripts and documentary material

Transcribing a total of seventy tapes was an extremely time consuming process but the tape-recording of interviews rather than a reliance on note-taking after the interview was seen to be important for three reasons. Firstly it meant avoiding the distracting use of note taking during interviews that could lead to problems of reactivity. Secondly it provided a more complete record of the interview. Note-taking is prone to selectivity, and largely dependent on memory, and cannot "offer the detail found in transcripts of recorded talk" (Silverman, 1993: 117).

Thirdly, use of verbatim text was critical to achieving plausibility and credibility of my interpretations presented in the final write up of my thesis. It allowed a more thorough analysis of not only what was being said but also how this was being said, and provided vital clues regarding prevailing discourses within the particular organisational context. Tape recordings allowed repeated listening of the discussion, helping me to pick up innuendoes and categories that people used in interviews that were missed during early stages of categorisation and analysis of data. Care was taken to analyse my style of questioning and interjected responses in order to identify instances where prompts by myself may have predetermined the informant's response (Thomas, 1993).

Documentary evidence provided by respondents provided a critical textual material used to build up a number of explanations and validate relevant information gathered from interviews. These included minutes, memos, company newsletters, notices, letters to staff, information packs and briefing documents. They allowed me to check for meaning with their producers and with recipients as to their interpretation, and proved useful in gauging the extent to which a sequence of events was planned in advance.

Discourse analysis and data gathering procedures took place simultaneously, enabling me to cycle back and forth between thinking about existing data and generating strategies for collecting new data. Following Ritchie and Spencer's "Framework Approach" (1994) a summary of each document and interview transcript was indexed and filed according to date, place and source of information. Summaries were initially structured along the lines of "contact summary sheets" suggested by Miles and

Huberman (1994: 51). They were completed as soon as possible after the initial field contact, and highlighted key issues emerging from field notes and interview transcripts.

These summaries served three purposes. Firstly, early write ups provided a useful reflective overview of what went on during an interview or discussion, much of which might have been lost if left until the data were coded and analysed more thoroughly. Secondly, they were central to the development of topic guides and subsequent planning of future interviews. Finally, summaries helped provide some structure to the early process of familiarisation with the raw data, the identification of emergent themes, and a start list of codes.

3.2.6 Making sense of the data and the development of a theoretical framework

A start list of codes was drawn up after the first few interviews, which largely reflected initial themes guiding the research (see below) and some more specific codes closer to respondents' categories. Codes were attached to phrases, sentences and paragraphs, connected to text that revealed those themes highlighted below. Single passages often contained a number of different themes and resulted in multiple indexing which helped highlight patterns of association within the data.

Initial themes guiding data gathering and analysis

- Perceived benefits / expectations and understandings of teamworking
- Broad process descriptions ie "development of transition plans", "articulation of a working model of teamworking"; "generating dissatisfaction with status quo".
- Emergence of new HRM-based practices and associated figures of speech and their linkages to processes of change described above
- Who were perceived to be "key players or change agents" in the design and execution of change
- Aspects of context perceived to be important by actors involved ie economic legal context, exposure to new ideas internal and external to the company.

The process of coding acted as an efficient data-labelling and retrieval device that facilitated the ongoing blend of data collection and analysis. Systematic application of the index was not however a simple routine exercise and the process involved continual amendments to the coding framework. Coded material was summarised and outlines of these placed into matrix displays. Relevant page and paragraph number of the source

material was noted, allowing quick access to the original document. While this process was extremely time-consuming, it allowed a more open-minded and more context-sensitive appraisal of research material. A sample list of codes is presented in appendix three.

Matrices were partially ordered (Miles and Huberman, 1994) in that they imposed minimal conceptual structure on the data displayed. I was very conscious of avoiding a reductionist approach and rejected a conventional approach to content analysis concerned with the frequency of particular words, phrases or concepts. Rather, matrices charted outlines of my interpretation of ongoing events within the case organisation and were both role-ordered and time-ordered. The former type of chart was used to make sense of role perspective differences between occupational groups ie between different levels and functions of managers, and included outlines of individual accounts of change. These charts were compared, and later synthesised with time-ordered charts that outlined documentary material of retrospective and real time events over periods of up to five years (see sample in appendix four). Time-ordered charts were critical to the process of understanding the flow and connection of events, and identifying broad phases of change within each of the cases.

As textual summaries evolved I developed case narratives that were later structured into broad phases of change within which HRM was constructed and reconstructed; evolution, transformation and incorporation:

- Evolution: emergence of a new root metaphor of employment relations that signified a highly unitarist and more optimistic approach. Links drawn with antecedents of change including extant order of discourse.
- Transformation: new discourse developed as meanings multiplied and tensions between old and new texts increased, alongside movement to foreclose meaning.
- Incorporation: elements of the new discourse became incorporated into workplace routines thus becoming part of the natural language of the organisation.

Towards the end of the fieldwork, I became less reliant on coded text and more on extended case narratives combined with continued readings of source material and a range of literature across substantive fields, including work on organisational power and politics, organisational discourse, human resource management, and organisational

change. This approach was vital to ensure reflexivity and to arrive at both a practical understanding of the case material, and rich descriptions of the processes by which HRM emerged. Final case study write-ups were largely drawn from a synthesis of earlier charts (archival and interview data), case summaries, and continual referral to source material and the literature. It meant that the division between theorising as part of the literature review and presentation /interpretation of each case displayed in the thesis as less clear cut than that found in more traditional case study write-ups.

The theoretical framework grounded in the case studies is explained in chapter six. Consistent with Alvesson and Deetz's notion of theory (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 39), it represents a way of seeing the world rather than an abstract representation of it. As such it can be viewed as a lens that can be used in observation rather than a mirror of "reality" and its acceptance to the reader based on its ability to provide useful ways of conceptualising, thinking and talking about HRM.

3.3 Introduction to the two cases

The aim was to collect data that was processual (Pettigrew, 1995) and comparative and to be able to expand and generalise theories rather than test a hypothesis (Yin, 1994). While several case studies might have augmented external validity, the selection was restricted to two in order that the necessary depth of analysis could be obtained within the time available.

A strategy of "intensity sampling" (Patton, 1990) was adopted that meant looking for case organisations that manifested the phenomenon of interest. This included large manufacturing organisations that are adopting teamworking arrangements and innovative HRM techniques perceived to be of strategic importance by the senior mangers instigating the change. Both manufacturing plants chosen for this purpose were "key players" in their respective corporations (suture manufacturing and production of chemicals). Both aimed to improve the competitive position of the firm through the introduction of teamworking arrangements and new methods of manufacturing, coupled with the development of new HRM practices (explained in the following section).

While it is recognised that each case is unique, attempts were made to find more general grounds on which to compare and reach overall conclusions about viewing the nature and role of HRM within the two case studies. A profile of the two cases presented in this study is presented below, followed by a short discussion of the context within which change was emerging within each company.

Table 3.2 Case study outlines

BP chemicals Grangemouth (BPGR) **Union density (manual staff) of nearly 100%.** **Non-manual staff were non-unionionised.**	**Ethicon Ltd (UK)** **Non-union firm**
BP Chemicals Grangemouth (BPGR) is a subsidiary of the British Petroleum Group (BP) and in 1992 was one of three chemicals plants situated in the UK, including plants in Baglan Bay and in Hull. During 1994-1997 BPGR was structured along functional lines into twelve departments and employed approximately thirteen hundred staff of whom seven hundred and fifty were production or maintenance operators (100/0:Male/Female). The research focused on change within its chemicals manufacturing operations that were clustered into four areas shown below. • *North Side Group:* included the Gasoline Treatment Unit, the Benzene plant, the Polybutene Plant, and Ethanol 111 plant These products were used in the production of Styrene, rubber, paints and cosmetics respectively • *Two Rigidex plants*: produced high-density polyethylene used in the downstream manufacture of containers and household chemicals. • *Innovex plant:* produced low-density polyethylene used in the downstream manufacture of flexible films mainly for use in the packaging industry. • *Olefins Group:* included "G4" and "KG" crackers, which produced the feed materials (polyethylene and ethanol), used by the other plants.	Ethicon Limited is a manufacturer of surgical sutures and needles, and a wholly owned subsidiary of the American owned multinational, Johnson and Johnson[27]. In 1990, the corporation was divided into three segments, Consumer, Pharmaceuticals, and the Professional sector. The latter covered the manufacture of sutures and related products, and in Europe included plants within France, Germany, Italy, and Scotland (Ethicon Ltd). Between 1990-1995, the majority of staff within Ethicon Ltd was employed in the operations department, divided into four manufacturing areas shown below. The case study was based on changes taking place within the suture assembly and packaging plant at Sighthill *. The plant employed about fifteen hundred people, of whom approximately twelve hundred were production operators (80/20: Female/Male). <u>Manufacturing areas and their locations</u> • Wet Process Plant *(Fountainbridge, Edinburgh): manufactured surgical catgut from beef and sheep intestine.* • *Needle manufacturing* (Crossway, Edinburgh): manufactured stainless needles and surgical staplers. • *Braiding unit (*Livingston): produced braided silk, polyester and polyamide materials. • * *Suture assembly and packaging* (Sighthill, Edinburgh): This housed the company headquarters, and the main manufacturing plant, supplied from the other three plants.

[27] Ethicon was founded by G F Merson in 1915 and acquired by J&J in 1947.

3.3.1 BP Chemicals (Grangemouth)

Within the BP Group strategic change included whole scale restructuring and the launching in 1989 of a culture change programme labelled "Project 2000", introduced by the chairman of the time. The intention of project 2000 was to improve BP's competitive position by replacing strong hierarchical control with a corporate culture described by the chairman as "the corporate glue"(Lorenz, 1990), "that works on trust and openness and teamwork" (Cibin and Grant, 1996: 304). This meant a break away from the pluralist management style that typified employment practices within the company, and the adoption of an avowedly unitarist approach in which people became defined as "the company's most valuable asset" (BP Chemicals World Oct, 1993: 6).

Within this context the BPGR case offered a good opportunity to contribute to an understanding of the processes of HRM-based change, at the level of the firm. It was part of the only complex in which BP's three business streams had an operational base (BP Exploration, BP Oil and BP Chemicals), and was described by senior managers as being of "strategic importance" to the company's future plans.[28] This provided high economic leverage to effecting an agenda for culture change in the chemicals plant introduced by the works general manager under the label of "One Team" in 1994. The initiative focused on the removal of collective bargaining for production/maintenance workers and a shift away from a pluralist orientation to an HRM approach that centred on the development of self directed manufacturing teams and performance related pay.

Data revealed ways in which "One Team" was framed by a discourse that was a blend of both "soft" and "hard" HRM texts emerging from a mix of existing discursive formations within the plant and external discourses that signified a new "root metaphor" of industrial relations (Dunn 1990). The language associated with the "soft" version built upon management practice that traditionally had emphasised a collaborative relationship with trade unions and a caring welfare image reflected in an emphasis on job security and personnel procedures concerned with notions of "justice" and "fairness".

Single channel bargaining arrangements existed for three unions on site[29] and union density amongst industrial staff was virtually one hundred percent[30]. There was a wide range of union facilities on site, including "check-off" and a full time trade union convenor. All collective bargaining occurred at plant level, and the TGWU had the strongest voice representing over five hundred production workers. Unions had worked closely with management during a "benchmarking exercise" in 1992, agreeing to the removal of job demarcations between maintenance and craft workers. This co-operative style allowed for the development of an integrative approach to bargaining articulated in the latest industrial staff agreement; Objective (...)" to create and maintain an atmosphere of common purpose in which the continuing changes essential for the long term prosperity of the Company and its employees can be achieved" (January 1995 Industrial Staff Agreement: 3)

While phrases such as " common purpose" signalled a form of "social partnership" (Income Data Services, 1998) between the senior team and trade unions, the WGM considered that collective agreements constituted a significant barrier to the long-term pursuit of continuous improvement in production processes and working practices. They represented a form of "hard" contracting (Tyson, 1995) that centred on the negotiation over the effort-reward bargain, and it was believed that this reinforced an instrumental orientation towards work amongst industrial staff and a climate of low trust.

A key objective of the "One Team" initiative was to de-recognise unions for bargaining purposes in order to remove "us and them" attitudes and behaviours and to induce a spirit of "working together" to beat the competition[31]. Inextricably linked with this objective was a "hard" version of HRM concerned with increased organisational flexibility and efficiency and the development of a performance management system

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[28]The complex is supplied by oil and gas from the North Sea through the Forties pipeline system and provides the main feedstock for ethylene production.

[29] This included the General and Municipal Boilermakers Union (GMB) and Amalgamated and Engineering and Electronics Trade Union (AEU) for craftsmen, and The Transport and General Workers Trade Union (TGWU) for production operators.

[30] Non-manual staff were not recognised for bargaining purposes nor belonged to either of the unions on site.

[31] "Us and them" has been defined in social-psychological terms as " (...) the perception of a clear division between managers and workers and a feeling of identification with one of these groups" (Kelly and Kelly, 1991: 26).

that sought to ensure employees "added value" to business. Case analysis explores ways in which organisation members were both enabled and constrained by the competing texts of HRM and the nexus between this dynamic and socio- political structures internal and external to the firm.

3.3.2 Ethicon Ltd.

The second case provided a useful comparative study of change taking place within a non-union manufacturing organisation that was also regarded as having particular "strategic importance" to the parent group, Johnson and Johnson (J&J)[32]. The Group during the mid 1980s had become notable for its reputed "excellence" in the management of people issues within its US manufacturing plants (Peters and Waterman, 1982). As competition within the healthcare industry intensified, J&J encouraged its business units world-wide to emulate examples of "excellence" within the company (J&J Annual Reports 1989, 1990, 1981). This influence, coupled with an increase in local competition, triggered a change initiative introduced by the operations director at Ethicon which signalled a break away from a "Fordist" approach to manufacturing (Starkey and McKinlay, 1993), to one labelled "continuous flow manufacture" (CFM). It was envisioned that CFM was to be based on a cellular manufacturing design and an HRM-centred approach that focused on the development of self-directed production teams, and the introduction of group as opposed to individual incentive arrangements.

In contrast to the team-based structures that were characteristic of "excellent organisations" emerging elsewhere in J&J, the system of management with Ethicon at that time was based on a bureaucratic and hierarchical organisational structure, in which jobs were highly specialised, and decision making firmly rested with management. While "collectivist structures" existed in the form of consultative committees[33], emphasis was placed on direct methods of communication including surveys, and briefing procedures. Moreover employee work performance was strictly controlled

[32] Ethicon UK was regarded as the most efficient producer in Europe of Prolene, a labour intensive product. Demand for Prolene from NHS customers during the early 1990s began to increase significantly as synthetic sutures replaced the traditional use of animal products (catgut material). During the second year of fieldwork within the organisation, Ethicon became the "European centre" for the manufacture of Prolene materials (company secretary).

[33] Formal consultative committees included Job Evaluation and Pensions committees.

through an individual output-based incentive bonus scheme applied through the use of traditional work study techniques.

These arrangements had the advantage of being easy to understand and operate, providing there was adequate supervision to maintain high levels of product quality. Quality assurance inspectors at that time carried out all routine inspection, but no direct link was made between quality of work and the payment system. Employee development was restricted to job training in one particular skill, and no formal appraisal scheme existed for direct incentive workers.

Alongside the technically rational approach to people management noted above, there was evidence of a paternalistic orientation towards the welfare of employees reflected in policies geared to induce worker consent and loyalty and the development of a family atmosphere. These two approaches manifested inherent tensions in managing the employment relationship broadly similar to the BP case study noted above, and reflected the well-documented oscillation between the "caring " and "control" aspects of management identified in chapter two (Watson, 1977; Watson and Watson, 1999; Legge, 1995b).

Historically, the control perspective had dominated management practice at the plant and was associated with an instrumental orientation amongst operating staff that was perceived by the operations director as a significant constraint to the improvement in quality standards (which depended upon an increase in the exercise of employee discretion). He considered that the breaking down of "us and them " attitudes through the introduction of employee involvement practices on the shopfloor would lead to important improvements in the already high standard of quality at Ethicon.

The operations director's vision for CFM built on his earlier experience of the introduction of quality circles (within suture finishing) in 1981, which failed to meet their objectives and were disbanded within four years of inception. Reasons for failure were complex and included difficulties associated with grafting circles onto existing

organisational processes, and a lack of support from middle managers to the philosophy of human relations underpinning quality circles (Brennan, 1988).

The vision of "CFM" created by the operations director was influenced by the belief that a more fundamental change in manufacturing processes and management practice was required in order to allow for long-term improvements in quality and reduction in manufacturing costs. These ideas were framed by a management lexicon that drew upon the discourse of "excellence" emerging within J&J and mirrored concerns at corporate level to modernise management practice throughout the company in order to ensure the future success of all its businesses in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Case analysis draws attention to the intertextuality of HRM that is shown to be pivotal to an understanding of processes of organisational change.

3.3.3 Structure of case studies

Each case study is divided into five sections. Section one provides an overview of the antecedents of change recognising the importance to the researcher of understanding the emergence of HRM discourse within its historical context. Sections two to four explore the processes of change within each case over a period of up to five years and is structured round three broad overlapping phases of change within which HRM emerged (evolution, transformation, incorporation). These phases followed a similar pattern within each case to well known processual models of change (for example Dawson, 1994; Pettigrew, 1985; Doz and Prahalad, 1988; Lewin, 1958, cited in Burnes, 1996:182). The final section of each case draws together main findings and structures these round three themes grounded in the data analysis:

- the fluidity of HRM (HRM as process)
- the role of HRM in the structuring of meaning
- the relationship between context and processes by which meanings become shared and/or fragmented.

Outline of the three phases of organisational change

Phase one: Evolution

Change was initiated in each case by a key executive who had the capacity to influence "strategic conversations" to create a shift in cognitions amongst the top team, leading to the emergence of a vision that challenged the status quo and "order of discourse" within the organisation. An emergent HRM discourse that constituted elements of the prevailing control and welfare discourses, and external discourses of excellence and enterprise, framed this visioning process. Data revealed that while the HRM discourse was open to multiple readings it offered a series of metaphors, including "market" and "team", utilised by dominant coalitions to promote univocal images of change and obfuscate inherent contradictions between its "hard" and "soft" dimensions. These processes of discursive closure were characterised by a series of power shifts within each case that were both enabled and constrained by micro and macro organisational structures.

Phase two: Transformation

This stage was first characterised by an increase in multiple self-interested readings of HRM amongst change agents, evident in a multi-layered analysis of conversations framing implementation strategies for change. Through the use of a language that invoked concepts of empowerment and employee involvement, change instigators were successful in promoting a univocal vision of change and in achieving "voluntary" acceptance amongst subordinates of new terms and conditions described in the form of a "set overlap" (Collins, 1998). Shared interests and understandings soon became strained as short-term successes were encouraged through the development of "quick wins" (BPGR) or establishment of "pilot cells" (Ethicon). These successes were used by change agents to legitimise and sustain momentum for change. They also led to cycles of negotiated social construction across all levels of management and on the shopfloor, as subordinates began to challenge particular readings of HRM preferred by dominant groups.

Phase three: Incorporation

Management activity during the final phase focused on consolidating formal organisational policies and procedures allowing for change to become partially "anchored" in new social structures and practices. As action plans were implemented and a larger number of employees gained concrete experience of change, they were more able to comprehend and deconstruct the new discourse thus exposing its ambiguity. This led to overt resistance in engaging in a vocabulary that had been largely managerially defined, and a subsequent re-negotiation of meanings and reshaping of HRM policies. Elements of extant "control" and "welfare" discourses overlapped and competed with the emergent HRM discourse. Data revealed that the intertextuality of HRM depended upon ongoing shifts in power relations and social structures at micro- and macro levels, as organisational participants continuously shaped and re-shaped the "rules of the game" (Silverman, 1970).

4 Chapter Four : Ethicon Case Study

4.1 Antecedents of change

Ethicon was managed by an executive board[34] who traditionally enjoyed considerable freedom in devising their own business and personnel strategies. J&J's organisational structure displayed "loose-tight" properties that meant each of its one hundred and fifty product divisions were given a large measure of autonomy, circumscribed by a set of core values presented as the J&J Credo (Peters and Waterman, 1982: 309).[35] These focused on values of quality, innovation, customer service and an emphasis on viewing employees as individuals, illustrating a firm non-union approach to employee relations (appendix five).

While the credo statement had a universal message about respect for the individual and so forth, the company did not emphasise tightly prescribed behaviours across its diverse range of organisations and national cultures.
Nevertheless a range of mechanisms were used as ways of inculcating these core values, including a network of informal communications facilitated by shifting of people between divisions, and a company-wide Credo Survey (undertaken bi-annually) which provided measures of employee commitment to corporate values.

As the company experienced more competitive markets data revealed that the issue of corporate identity and culture assumed increasing importance. This was reflected in a decision by the J&J Board in the 1980s, that all company products show the J&J label as well as that of the division (Sales Manager). More recently in the experience of the Manager of Resourcing, head office had begun "to take a closer interest in credo survey results and our management practices". He explained that since the 1980s J&J was operating in a number of growth markets and held a strong financial position as it

[34] Comprising a managing director and six directors responsible for operations, finance, research and development, personnel, international sales and marketing, and marketing of sutures
[35] Central staff were small in number, and each product division housed all the main functions, including research and development, finance and personnel.

entered the 1990s [36]. At the same time the company was confronted by intensified competition and the top team looked towards enhancing the contribution of human resources to the future success of the business that was to depend upon staff loyalty, commitment and competence. The chairman of the time declared that sustained competitive advantage required innovation in technology, research and the development of human resources, and that the latter was "the most important of all" (Annual Report 1989). Examples of best practice were publicised in the company's annual report, including innovative HRM strategies and new manufacturing designs based on the Just-In-Time philosophy, which sought to enhance quality of product and customer service.

The chairman talked about "speaking the same language all over the world ... Quality" (1989 Annual Report) which was rooted in the discourse of "excellence" emerging within J&J's US businesses during the 1980s. This new management lexicon was characterised by a mix of "hard" and "soft" HRM terms such as competitive advantage, innovation, quality and personnel development and these became the "watchwords" of company mission statements and corporate and business planning;

> "Excellence in the 1990s: J & J's goal is to be the best and most competitive health care products company in the world. To do so we want to excel in several ways (....) We want to create an environment that allows our people, our most important asset, to contribute to their maximum potential." (1989 Annual Report).
>
> "We have never had more tough competition than we have today, in every field in which we compete (...) We have more than thirty three thousand remarkable men and women around the world who make it all happen. It is their intelligence, imagination and dedication that gives us the edge in a tough competitive environment" (Chairman, 1990 Annual Report).

The above narrative mirrored much of the ideological values and discourses emerging during the Regan and Thatcher administrations in the 1980s (du Guy and Salaman, 1996, 1998), and in the work of management gurus such as Tom Peters and Rosabeth Moss Kanter (Collins, 1999). Case study findings revealed how Ethicon managers appropriated these external discourses as they made sense of environmental events

[36] In 1989, net earnings exceeded one billion dollars and sales increased by over eight percent from the previous year. Operating profits amongst European businesses in the Professional division was seven hundred and thirty seven million dollars, an increase in thirty four million dollars since 1988 (Annual Report, 1989).

facing the organisation and sought to reach a common vision for change and design the change transition. An analysis of these processes, illustrated in figure 4.1, is examined in the following section. This shows how managers, through conversation and the negotiation of meaning re-articulated the existing " order of discourse" (Fairclough, 1992) within Ethicon, which brought traditional discourses and the newly introduced HRM discourse into a new mix.

Historically discursive formations within Ethicon were dominated by a "control discourse" (Watson, 1994; 1995 a; Walton, 1985); in which managers treat human resources as a cost to be minimised, placed primary emphasis to the meeting of months-end targets and talk of "us and them" relations between management and workers. The language and practice associated with this particular text type shall be referred to as an "engineering discourse". This discursive formation contrasted with an alternative language and practice of personnel management that was framed by a "caring " ethos (Watson, 1977) and shall be referred to as a "welfare" discourse, reflected in policies geared to induce worker consent and loyalty to the company. These centred round notions of "justice" and "fairness" illustrated by the excerpt from the personnel procedures manual shown below, and an internalisation strategy reflected in high wages (top quartile of industry), an emphasis on job security and an atmosphere of lifelong allegiance to the company.[37]

> **"Standard Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual": introductory statement**
>
> "Our Credo declares our commitment in Ethicon Limited to the provision of a competent management whose actions are just and ethical. One of the features of fairness in the management of people is the consistency of treatment accorded to employees throughout the organisation. Consistency depends upon a common understanding of the Company's approach to personnel practice procedure."
> (G Borthwick, Managing Director)

"Welfare" discursive practices were characteristically marginalised by "engineering" practices that included close direction of operating staff and inspection of their work,

[37] Length of service was high amongst manual staff (15 years service was commonplace) and much celebrated. In addition to monetary awards given for long service, employees received a Gilt "E" pin for every five years service which was worn on personal clothing, and a service pin worn on company clothing. These awards were presented to employees on the shopfloor by the managing director himself, and publicised in the local house journal.

and an individual output-based incentive bonus scheme applied through the use of traditional work study techniques. The two contrasting approaches manifested tensions that are inherent in managing the employment relationship as highlighted in chapter two. Organisations (controlling coalitions) require both the consent *and* control of labour in order to remain profitable and these contrasting objectives are reflected in the well-documented oscillation between the "caring " and "control " aspects of personnel management practice identified by Watson (1977), and Legge (1995b).

The relationship between the two discursive formations at Ethicon altered in shape and form as an external HRM discourse entered conversations for change. It led to the emergence of a complex and multifaceted discourse that constituted both soft and hard HRM discursive practices that are examined in the next section.

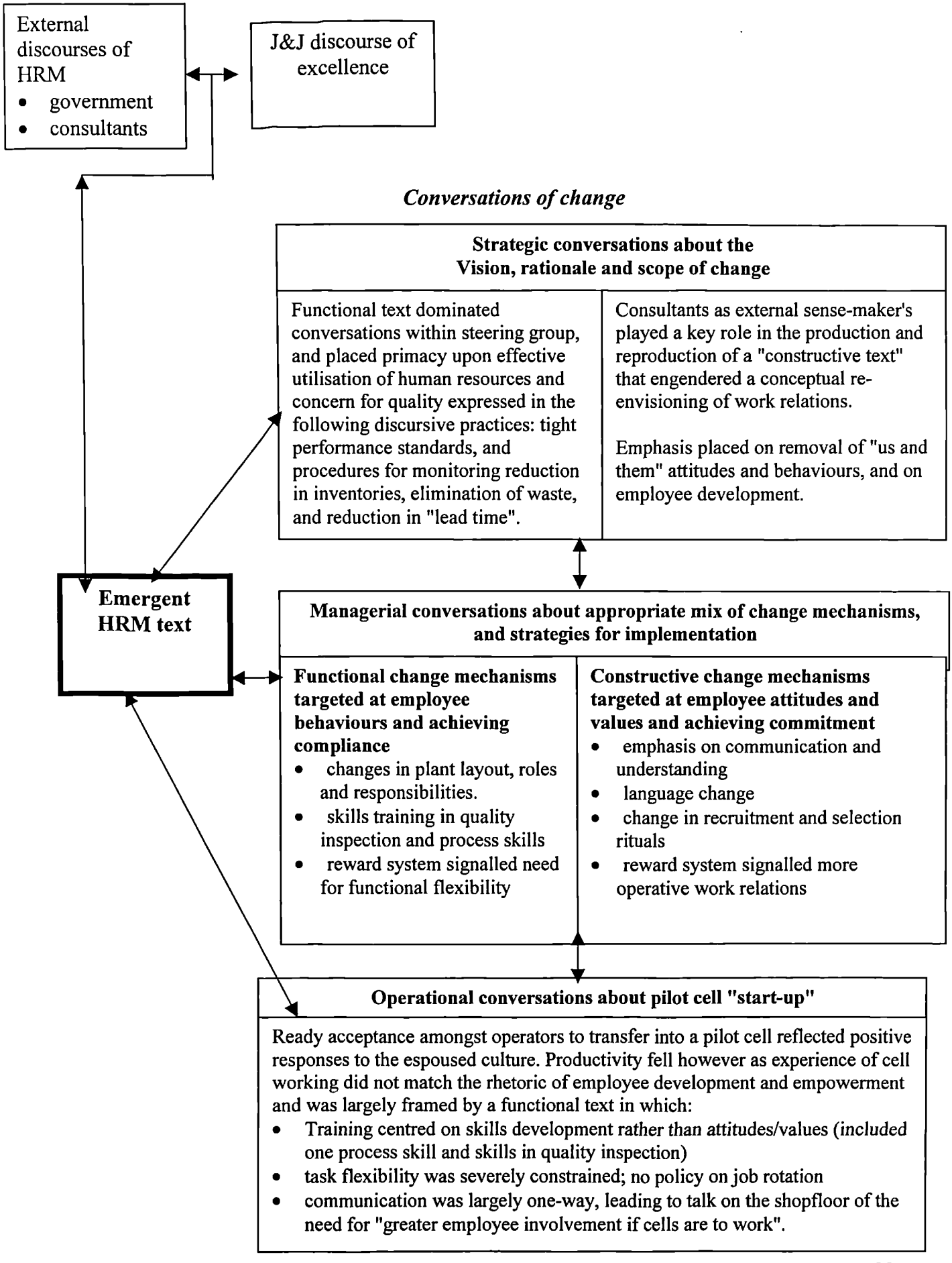
4.2 Evolution of HRM at Ethicon

This section provides an analysis of the first phase of change, focusing on the multifaceted nature of HRM posited in the proposed theoretical framework, and the nexus between the emergent HRM discourse, political relations within the firm and wider social structures. As explained in chapter two, "conversation" is used as a metaphor to describe the interplay between processes of text production and interpretation amongst participants at different levels of managerial activity.

Figure 4.1 summarises key features of this dynamic illustrating three levels of conversation (strategic, managerial, operational) within which HRM surfaced and evolved. These comprised a complex mix of multi-layered and sequential practices, intimately linked to the wider organisational context in which they were situated. The operations director, Patterson, explained that the Continuous Flow Manufacture (CFM) change initiative was triggered by a fall in sales during 1989 and 1990, followed by the results of a market survey initiated by the marketing department and carried out by external consultants. The survey highlighted customer demands for a quicker and more effective delivery service, much influenced by new cost conscious NHS trusts who were cutting back on stock levels. These triggers for change prompted Patterson to question current manufacturing practices within the plant and learn about alternate manufacturing designs.

Figure 4.1

Phase one of change: evolution of HRM



Data indicated that sensemaking activities amongst senior managers were framed by an external discourse of HRM and associated "recipes" extolled by the parent company and local (external) consultants. Patterson talked of an "increasing exposure to pockets of excellence" within J&J and his attendance at local seminars which led to a "felt need" for change in management practice, held amongst senior colleagues within his department;

> "All this talk encouraged us to get involved in going to seminars, where we soon learned that our lead times were longer, levels of work in progress was high ... and there developed a genuine understanding that things in the future were not going to be as easy as things in the past".[38]

These findings are consistent with extant research noted in chapter two. Managerial interpretations of organisational conditions have been shown to influence the need for strategic change more directly than the more objective measures associated with the rational approach to strategic planning (Webb and Dawson, 1991; Child and Smith, 1987; Rajagopalan and Spreitzer, 1996). Based on these principles, the development of a shared vision and set of core values amongst members of the top team becomes an important starting point for transformational change (Bate, 1994; Stace, 1996; Storey, 1992; Armstrong, 1996).

Drawing upon assumptions of consensus, visions are seen to provide the purpose and direction for change and create a context for calling into question current interpretive frames and organisational routines. Cultural diversity and the likelihood that different levels and functions of management have competing values and interests are downplayed in this integrationist view of culture change (Denham et al., 1997), and was implicit in the approach taken by the operations director to create support and generate strategies for change.

On the basis of his "expert power" (Buchanan and Badham, 1999; French and Raven, 1958) Patterson quickly reached agreement with Board members for him to forge ahead with the idea of CFM, based on the premise that the development of common

[38] Lead times were approximately twenty eight days

understandings could be assumed once the change programme went ahead. These conditions resemble the "fuzzy vision model" described by Schein (1985: 330);

> "Where the new leader states forcefully that the present is intolerable and performance must improve within a certain time frame but then relies on the organisation to develop visions of how actually to get there (...) as various proposals for solution are generated throughout the organisation, the leader selects and reinforces the ones that seem to make most sense".

4.2.1 Vision for change and the emergence of a new order of discourse

The "fuzzy vision" originally conceived by Patterson and his supporters was one that sought to move away from the line lay-out within suture assembly operations, to a cell configuration based on the principles of total quality management and just-in-time manufacturing, referred to as continuous flow manufacture (CFM). The company's suture assembly plant in the south-east of Edinburgh was targeted to be the centre of the new manufacturing design as shown in table 4.1 below.

The conception Patterson wished to convey was the creation of semi-autonomous product cells that would become responsible for quality inspection and defect prevention, and which required "culture change" within the plant. The implication of this for him meant a break away from "us and them " attitudes and behaviours between management and workers to a *"high trust" organisational culture in which operators* would be expected to assume more responsibility at work rather than "leaving their brains in the locker room". At the same time Patterson described CFM as a "cost- driven initiative" and voiced his concern to reduce manufacturing costs through a reduction in inventories, elimination of waste, and an improvement in quality. He pointed out that empowered work groups were not a necessary condition to achieve such results but the intention was simply "to exploit this where appropriate", illustrating inherent tensions between "caring" and control" aspects of employment relations noted earlier.

Table 4.1 Current Organisation of production work within suture assembly

The Sighthill plant employed about fifteen hundred people, and was organised functionally in departments according to three stages in the production process. The attaching of needles and sutures (the Attaching area), which were wound (Winding Area), and then enclosed in foil sachets (Foil / Packaging Area). Process descriptions for manufacturing positions are highlighted below, together with job titles and numbers employed.

Jobs were broken down by individual operation and each production worker performed one highly repetitive task. Each department was managed by a supervisor and their "leading hand" who deputised in his/her absence. Leading hands were promoted from the position of setter (supervised machine set ups and maintenance of parts) and received an additional yearly allowance of approximately nine hundred pounds in addition to their setter's salary. Leading hands and setters were paid a fixed salary plus up to twenty five per cent merit pay depending upon the results of their annual appraisal.

There were four shift patterns within the plant that allowed for production facilities to operate on a fully continuous basis ("day shift", "early shift", "twilight shift", "night shift").

Manufacturing Process	*Current Structure and Numbers Employed*	
Attaching : needles and suture material were attached ; variety of machine presses were used to attach suture material to drilled or channel needles. For the finer materials, for example Microresin *, needle attaching was done by hand and was the most highly skilled task within suture operations.	Operations Director	1
	Operations Manager	1
	Assistant Manufacturing Manager	1
	Attaching department	
	Foreman	1
	Supervisor	6
	Leading hand (= 3 setters)	8
	Setter	
	Operator (attacher)	300
	Clerical assistant	1
Winding : suture was then wound onto specified folder using a semi-automatic winding machine.	Winding Department	
	Foreman	1
	Supervisor	5
	Operator (winder)	250
	Clerical assistant	1
Foil and overwrap : final stages included the foil packaging of sutures using a rotary foil line and overwrap machine.	Foil and Overwrap Dept.	1
	Foreman	5
	Supervisor	6
	Leading hand (= 2 machine attendants)	
	Machine attendant	
	Operator (packer)	200
	Clerical assistant	1

Patterson's vision of CFM described below, drew upon the two different discourse conventions ("engineering" and "welfare") existing within Ethicon, and the emergent

HRM discourse. The following narrative presented by Patterson about the rationale for CFM illustrates this further;

> "The reasons for pursuing CFM slightly before 1990, were the hard business benefits, i.e. reduced lead time for manufacturing, significantly lower work in process, and we were looking to improve quality. These were the hard business benefits gained immediately on the introduction of CFM, and it wasn't teamworking. The driver wasn't employee empowerment. Having said that, within CFM there is the opportunity to develop and exploit these to the benefit of the employee and more importantly to the benefits of the customer. The customer is not concerned whether we have teamworking, he is not concerned whether we have a high work -in-progress, he is concerned about the product being available at the right time, the right price and the right quality, compared to the competition."

This narrative highlights contradictory "hard" and "soft" texts featuring the emergent HRM discourse framing strategies for change, and the dominance of the former which gave primacy to a close fit between business and HRM policies and the need to legitimise any investment in people in rational analytic terms. In contrast, the latter text framing Patterson's comment about employee "opportunity" was more concerned with satisfying employee needs for growth and development.

Surfacing of HRM within strategic conversations

"Strategic conversations" introduced by the operations director and his supporters were not located within a fixed discourse of HRM suggested by normative accounts of organisational change noted in chapter two. Rather, they were characterised by a mixture of old and new texts creating conflict and tensions in which dominant groups attempted to preserve restructure or renew the dominant order of discourse. Groups who enjoyed a controlling influence upon "organisational sensemaking" (Westley, 1990) included production, accountancy and work study disciplines.

Within this context the personnel director and his team were excluded from early strategic conversations about CFM, consistent with what they described as "an engineering culture" in which the personnel managers' role was one of "typically reacting" to technically-oriented decisions made by the line. Decisions about the design of change became the responsibility of the CFM Steering group (chaired by Patterson)

that included a cross-section of managers from finance, work study and production disciplines with no involvement from personnel.

With agreement from the Board, the steering group launched an action plan under the label of CFM noted earlier and which outlined the intention to set up a "pilot cell" in catgut assembly, followed by the phasing in of cellular manufacturing over a period of three to five years. A "CFM manager" was appointed and became responsible for the day to day management of change.

Committee minutes revealed that initial planning activities were framed by a language of "hard" HRM which emphasised the effective utilisation of labour and development of new quality controls and shall be referred to as a "functional" text that built upon and was consistent with the traditional "engineering discourse". Similarly, mechanisms for culture change focused on "hard" structural changes, and became an exercise in what Beer et al. have called "task alignment" - reorganising employee roles, responsibilities and relationships to solve specific business problems (Beer et al., 1993: 101). Patterson explained that there was little discussion amongst participants of the concepts of teamworking or CFM given a perception of the need to implement transformational change rapidly;

> "We did not have the luxury of discussing and debating. We needed to achieve the hard business benefits quickly, and it was assumed that other issues such as bringing support functions into line, teamworking, developing employees, would fall into place. We were unable to debate these issues up front, we were having serious problems, and serious times call for serious solutions".

An implicit assumption underlying this approach is that concepts such as quality, flexibility and teamwork can be defined and measured in an objective and relatively unambiguous fashion. In practice there immediately began to emerge multiple interpretations about the meanings of terms depending upon the orientations and interests of different managers. Data revealed a common consciousness amongst personnel managers who frequently eschewed the technical orientation favoured by line managers, and favoured a discourse of "soft" HRM which built upon and was consistent

with the old "welfare" discourse. This shall be referred to as a "constructive" text[39], and invoked competing definitions of new terms introduced by the operations director (for example flexibility, quality and teamworking) which signified a developmental approach to management and notions of employee commitment rather than compliance (Storey 1995, Tyson 1995).

Given the exclusion of personnel specialists from initial strategic conversations about CFM noted earlier, sensemaking amongst change instigators was dominated by a "functional" text and discursive practices. It was not until policy decisions emanating from strategic conversations filtered down to the managerial level that the "constructive" text became more influential. Conversations at this level focused on the recruitment and reward of cell operators and became an important forum for the negotiation of meanings between personnel and the line, characterised by a complex mix of functional and constructive texts. This dynamic, illustrated in figure 4.1, is reflected in the following excerpts taken from minutes of meetings concerned with a new payment system for the pilot cell. These indicated that the Head of Resourcing was keen to promote a reward system that would encourage responsible autonomy and more varied work for cell workers, which meant;

> "(...) moving away from the idea of "a mini production department within a cell to one in which operators are given *the opportunity to be accountable as a unit* rather than an individual and which should be geared towards enhancing operator flexibility and involvement " (Committee minutes, 7/2/91).

In contrast, work study engineers favoured a functional text that emphasised the control of costs and development of job skills as and when required which meant;

> "(...) operators being paid at a rate relating to their primary or main function within the cell plus a skill enhancement and group bonus scheme" (Committee minutes, 7th March 1991).

Textual analysis revealed that traditional cost accounting procedures played a significant role in the creation and re-creation of the emergent functional text. Aware that their performance was censured by negative variances, production and work study managers spent a lot of time, in the words of the personnel director;

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[39] "Constructive" is defined in the Oxford reference dictionary has "tending to form a basis for ideas, positive, helpful".

"(...) chasing the origins of the nature of negative variances to satisfy the accountants who manage these variances" .

The prevailing accountancy logic noted above was represented in the establishment of monitoring procedures for the pilot cell which focused on measuring the reduction in indirect labour and service department costs (Quality Assurance), and a reduction in inventory holding costs as shown in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Benefits Associated with CFM (Memorandum, 4th March 1991).

1. " Comparing the WIP in the traditional process required to achieve an output of 15,000 dozen per week produces an estimated annual saving of £17, 500. This is based on an average WIP of 6,800 dozen for CFM and 42,000 dozen for the traditional process.
2. An average lead time reduction from 23 working days to 3.2 working days.
3. The distance travelled by the product in the cell is 107m. The distance travelled in the traditional process is 421m.
4. A space saving due to WIP reduction (still to be calculated)
5. Greater focus and faster feedback on raw material problems to supplier departments.
6. A foil Tub Rejection Rate of 1.9% for the Cell compared with 2.8% in the traditional process. The % Bundles Rejected is 4.9% for the Cell compared with 14.2% in the traditional process.
7. Encouraging the team approach by the elimination of departmental barriers.
8. Provides a refocusing of QUIP (Quality) principles.
9. Highlights the need to achieve set up/changeover reduction.
10. Finally, and probably most importantly, the greatly reduced lead times facilitated by CFM can be used as a marketing weapon to achieve competitive advantage in the market place"

Measures of effective teamworking or employee morale that would be more consistent with a "constructive" text were absent, and the more sensitive issue of reward played down. This reflected continuing dominance of finance/engineering functions over the production and reproduction of an HRM discourse that favoured a rational analytical view of managing the human resource. Efforts to render their interpretation of information dominant centred on arguments about the strategic importance of technically oriented aspects of change. For example a reduction in "lead time" is described as having the potential to become "a marketing weapon to achieving competitive advantage". This provided the necessary emotive appeal of CFM to senior

managers, and led to the agreement from the Steering Group to progress with the CFM initiative[40].

Multilayered conversations and the shifting of meanings.

Rival interpretations of HRM amongst personnel and line managers involved in the change were reflected in mixed messages disseminated to operating staff during the launch of the pilot cell in the winter of 1990/1991 (table 4.3) and highlighted the ambiguity of meaning of "CFM " and "teamworking". In one sense CFM was used by recruitment administrators to describe a form of teamworking framed by a "constructive" text that allowed for increased operator control over there own jobs, greater responsibility for decision-making, and more variety at work.

The job title of production operator was relabelled to that of "cell operator" (later designated as "Team Member" in the job description as shown in appendix six) and the foreman position changed to team leader, signalling the importance of teamwork (the positions of leading hand and setter remained unchanged).[41] In addition recruitment advertisements described CFM as:

> "An opportunity to increase employee involvement in the manufacturing process (...) CFM is an innovative work structure that will require considerable amount of operator flexibility. *(CFM Recruitment notice 5 June 1990).*

In another sense the term CFM was used by production and planning engineers to describe a form of teamworking that was framed by a "functional text", couched in technical language and an understanding that;

> "Initial training was to be in inspection techniques only, and ... multi-skilling would only be carried out if and when necessary"
> (Operations manager, CFM Minutes 28th February 1990)

[40] It was expected that future cells would comprise two or three shifts, each made up approximately twenty operators. A production foreman (attaching department) would take dual responsibility for current cell production, and the supervisor's position was to become one of cell team leader. It was not clear at this stage what further changes should be made to the management structure.

[41] In mid 1994 a new post of cell group leader was established comparable with the traditional foreman's position.

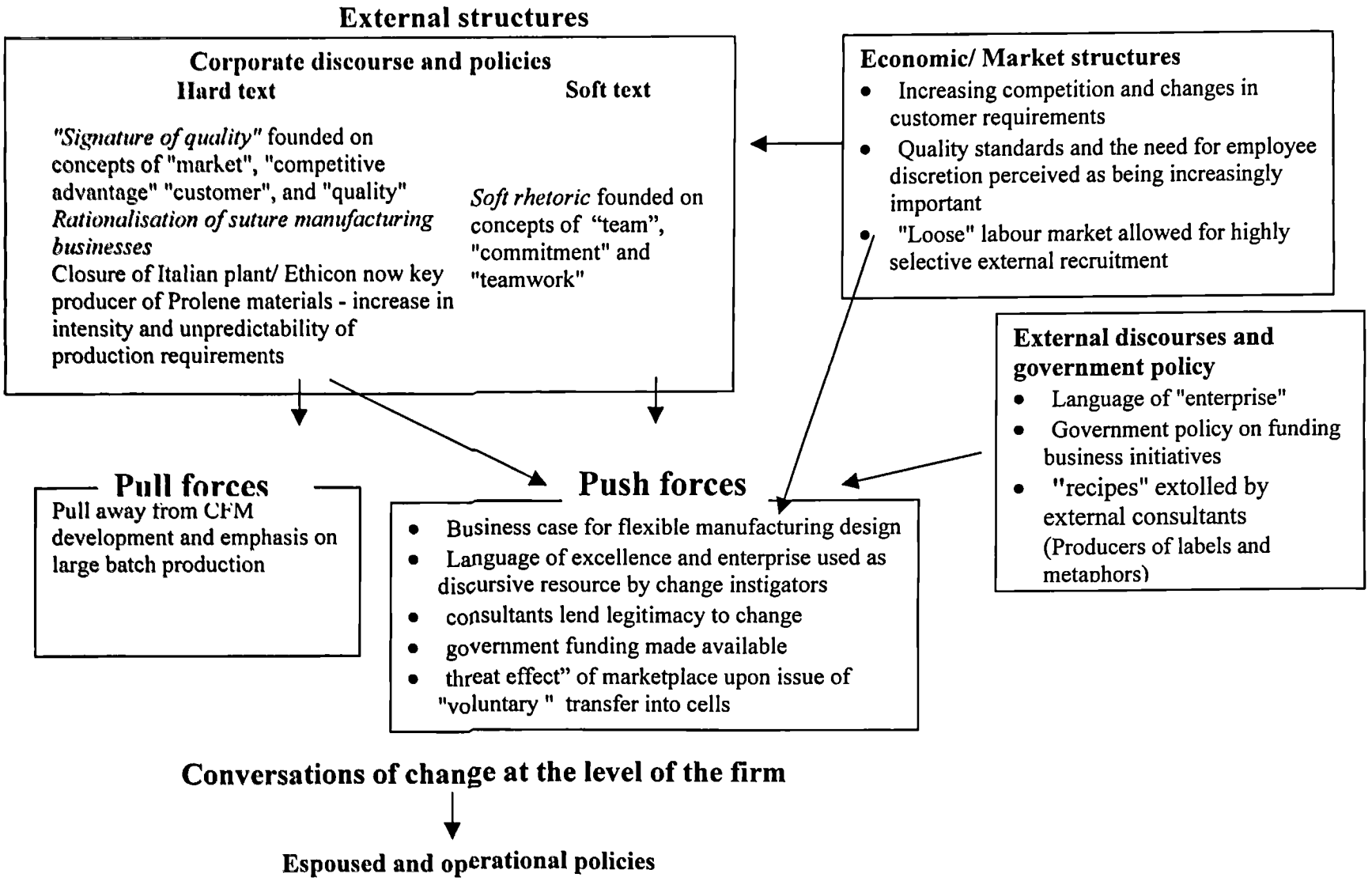
Table 4.3: Composition of Pilot (Catgut) Cell 42					
	Attacher		**Winder**	**Foil/O'Wrap**	**Total**
Days	1 *Class A*	5 *Class B*	7	3	16
"Twilight"	-	6	6	3	15

New cell recruits [43] found that their initial experience of cell working was consistent with the sense of CFM created by engineers and was little different to traditional assembly line work. At the same time their earnings potential was limited because of the continued failure for personnel and line managers to reach agreement on an appropriate pay system for cells prior to "start-up". Operators were guaranteed average earnings for twelve weeks (thus limiting opportunity to earn high individual bonuses) with the proviso that a final payment system would be proposed by the end of that period. Meanwhile they were expected to carry out their jobs much as they did in their original departments.

These arrangements continued for a period of eight months, during which time cell operators remained on individual direct incentive work. While they had become responsible for quality inspection, there was no job rotation or multi-skilling within the cell or evidence of an empowered form of work "sold" to recruits at the outset. It led to frustration amongst cell operators expressed in their "mediocre performance" recorded by the CFM steering group. Employee relations issues subsequently became a key concern of the group, reflected in the personnel director gaining a place on the committee and the reward issue being placed high on the change agenda. The re-positioning of the personnel function and its activities symbolised a significant shift in the power dynamics of change that allowed for more explicit development of a "constructive" text used to redefine management priorities and plans. This dynamic was linked to a complex web of micro-and macro-social structures that are examined in the next section.

[42] The day shift commenced operations in October, and the twilight shift in December 1990. Needle attachers were classified according to level of skill.
[43] Selection was originally based on traditional line/personnel interviews and an eye test.

Figure 4.2


External structures
Corporate discourse and policies
Hard text
Soft text
"Signature of quality" founded on concepts of "market", "competitive advantage" "customer", and "quality"
Rationalisation of suture manufacturing businesses
Closure of Italian plant/ Ethicon now key producer of Prolene materials - increase in intensity and unpredictability of production requirements
Soft rhetoric founded on concepts of "team", "commitment" and "teamwork"
Economic/ Market structures
• Increasing competition and changes in customer requirements
• Quality standards and the need for employee discretion perceived as being increasingly important
• "Loose" labour market allowed for highly selective external recruitment
External discourses and government policy
• Language of "enterprise"
• Government policy on funding business initiatives
• "recipes" extolled by external consultants (Producers of labels and metaphors)
Pull forces
Pull away from CFM development and emphasis on large batch production
Push forces
• Business case for flexible manufacturing design
• Language of excellence and enterprise used as discursive resource by change instigators
• consultants lend legitimacy to change
• government funding made available
• threat effect" of marketplace upon issue of "voluntary " transfer into cells
Conversations of change at the level of the firm
Espoused and operational policies

4.2.2 The dynamic of HRM vis-a-vis macro-social structures

Consistent with the proposed theoretical framework, data revealed that the emergent discourse of HRM was produced and reproduced through the interplay of workplace conversations and social structures internal and external to the firm. Those structures revealed by accounts of change as being most significant included changes in corporate decisions, the wider socio-political landscape, the role of consultants and an organisational culture of "individualism", each of which are examined below and illustrated in figure 4.2.

Corporate influence and wider social-economic structures

Tensions between "soft" and "hard" strategic choices made by the parent company had significant effects upon workplace conversations and associated discursive practices at Ethicon, consistent with extant research about the significance of "higher order" strategic decisions (Ahlstrand and Purcell, 1988; Purcell Ahlstrand, 1994). These influences are shown as "push" and "pull" forces, and were inextricably linked to wider macro –influences.

The language of "excellence" emerging at corporate level constituted a combination of two contrasting text types resonant with "hard" and "soft" versions of HRM (Storey, 1992; Guest, 1987). The former was reflected in corporate restructuring and streamlining of production facilities within J&J's suture manufacturing businesses, in order that they remain cost effective. While the corporation had achieved record net earnings of one point four billion dollars at the end of the financial year in 1991 it was facing increasing and intense competition world-wide (Annual Report, 1991: 4). Under these circumstances J&J instituted its "Signature of Quality" programme in 1992, which urged the corporation's operating companies to focus on three general goals: "Continuously Improving Customer Satisfaction, Cost Efficiency and the Speed of Bringing New Products to Market" (International Directory of Company Histories 1994: 283). Within the Professional sector this led to the rationalisation of suture production within J&J's four European operating plants in Germany, Italy, France and the UK. The Italian factory was closed and a logistics office was set up in Brussels to develop an integrated approach to the production planning of European plants. Because the German

plant was more automated, Ethicon UK was allocated a wider variety of small batch labour intensive materials and at the same time became the European centre for the manufacture of Prolene materials (company secretary).

There was tension between changes to secure the competitive advantage of the organisation noted above, and an alternate text embodied in the discourse of excellence that emphasised self-expression and high trust. These conflicts between soft and hard versions of HRM led to an ambiguous mix of "push-pull " forces upon the CFM initiative at Ethicon. Firstly, plans for the re-grouping of technology and people into cells would provide much of the manufacturing flexibility that was now required in terms of quicker changeover of production codes and reduced lead times, thus providing legitimacy or "push" towards the CFM programme;

> "Change has been slow. More recently, the European scene has been an important influence on CFM. It is now a main driver, the key reason why we should be doing more CFM" (operations director).

At the same time the increase in labour intensive manufacturing operations implied a significant increase in labour costs leading to a growing concern amongst the top team about the morale and efficient management of its human resources (company secretary). Funds were subsequently made available for the development of more sophisticated procedures for the recruitment of operators into new cells, and became an important source of HRM text production explained in the next section.

A further "push" factor associated with a change in corporate decisions was the intertextual nature of the excellence discourse. Its very ambiguity meant that on engaging in the language of excellence, change agents were in a position to alter it according to their own interpretations and interests within the confines of micro and macro social structures examined below. In this sense, the corporate discourse became a discursive resource upon which organisation members drew in their conversations for change at local level, and included new concepts such as "team" and "market" appropriated by change instigators to generate shared meanings amongst organisation participants.

An important "pull" factor restraining the momentum for change at Ethicon was associated with its new role as Prolene manufacturer. Following the restructuring of manufacturing businesses in Europe and the closure of the Italian plant, Ethicon became faced with unpredictable increases in production demand resulting in the emergence of an operational policy which placed cell operators on "the one task they know best" in order to maximise output (operations manager). This gap between espoused and operational policies (Brewster et al., 1983 [44]) led to employee relations problems as new cells were established during the second phase of change examined in section three.

Influence of macro-political structures

The socio-economic policies of the then Conservative government that aimed to create an "enterprise culture" (du Gay and Salaman, 1992, 1998; McInness 1987), were an important backdrop to the construction and reconstruction of HRM text at Ethicon. Personnel respondents explained that the launching of the nation-wide Investors in People Initiative (IIP) in 1991 provided an important benchmark of "best practice in HRM " which placed primacy on the integration of training and development strategies and practices with business objectives (Investors In People UK, 1995).

The vocabulary that framed this new policy initiative provided implicit legitimacy and coherence to the constructive language of HRM emerging at Ethicon. Importantly it could be drawn upon as a discursive resource from which personnel specialists could craft their own definitions of HRM, reflected in the formal mission statement and set of "strategic" HRM objectives shown below. The significance of IIP was reflected in the words of one manager who stated that;

> "Until we applied for "Investors in People", the company strategy and vision etc lived in drawers. Now there is an HR vision and an employee development strategy that pulls things together and forms a basis from which we can develop future cells" (Manager, management development).

[44] This refers to the way in which senior management is seen to order HRM policies vis a vis other policies (Marchington, 1994: 25).

Table 4.4 HRM Mission Statement

Our Human Resource Mission *To help achieve total customer satisfaction by attracting, retaining and developing employees with the skills necessary to meet the strategic needs of internal customers, within a safe and healthy working environment*	
Development Strategy 1. Focusing all employee development to enhance customer satisfaction 2. Developing sales and marketing training to provide customers with professional and knowledgeable support 3. Increasing computer literacy to ensure efficient usage of the technological investment made by the company 4. Increasing total employee involvement through employee empowerment, team building and goal setting.	**Resourcing Strategy** 1 To attract and assist line management to select, the right people 2 To promote positive working relationships by providing a framework which ensures consistent and fair treatment of every employee. 3 To provide every employee with fair and adequate compensation based on skill, knowledge, individual performance and / or team contribution. 4 To provide a framework of personnel policies which supports individuals within the organisation 5 To promote a healthy environment by providing an advisory service to employees and managers on work related health issues

Further evidence of State influence upon the dynamics of change, was the availability of grants to encourage employers to develop HRM-style initiatives that targeted individual and team development within the organisation. In 1992, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) launched a local initiative with a Management Consultancy organisation, S.R.I Inc. This sought to develop a selection instrument that could test an individual's potential to be an effective "team player", and resulted in the DTI part-funding a research consortium involving SRI Inc, Ethicon Ltd and Motorola Inc, with the aim of building;

> "A blueprint of the ideal team of people to work in modular or Cell manufacturing environment" (House Journal, Quality First, December 1992)".

A selection instrument was developed (page 110) that, with its emphasis upon teamworking and development of individual potential, provided an important template for the re-articulation of the emergent constructive text. Consultants played a significant role in lending legitimacy to this new text, as examined below.

Role of consultants and the development of a common "world view"

It was noted earlier that a growing recognition amongst change instigators of the contribution of people factors to the success of CFM had led to a re-positioning of the personnel function. It allowed personnel managers involvement in "strategic conversations" in which they were able to influence the collective mind-set of the dominant managerial group. This influence was enhanced by the employment of external consultants (APL Ltd) in August 1991, who at a "rational" level were engaged to provide technical support to the introduction of the new manufacturing design. Consistent with extant research, at the symbolic level consultants played a significant role in their capacity as "suppliers of labels and metaphors" (Gagliardi, 1990: 354).

In the early design stages of CFM the language of change was associated with talk of multi-skilling, flexibility and quality. Building upon the emergent discourse of HRM, APL introduced new concepts of "strategic HRM", "continuous improvement", and "empowerment" and on doing so presented what Gagliardi defines as a "creativity package", in which;

> " The products are labels and metaphors (...) the service is to show how to relate them to organizational life" (Gagliardi, 1990: 354).

During presentations to the senior team and members of the steering group, consultants summoned a sharper image of CFM through the use of labelling and metaphor, thereby instituting fresh impetus for change. They also served to re-articulate and legitimate the emergent HRM text and being perceived as "outside experts" provided an aura of rationality to decision processes (Pfeffer 1981: 142). Consistent with earlier research (Balogun et al., 1999), data revealed that consultants were more effective at persuading dominant coalitions of the need for change than internal change agents within the personnel function. The operations director explained that consultants played a "key role in spreading the word throughout the company of the strategic importance of cell working".

Speaking with the voice of authority/expertise, the new talk of HRM introduced by consultants was soon reflected within strategic and managerial levels of conversations. CFM Group minutes began to record the change initiative as a "strategic" issue, and a

range of new terms were adopted which signified the nature of this "strategic" intent, including phrases about competitive advantage, teamworking, employee involvement, continuous improvement, "best in class" and developing internal customers;

> "CFM is perhaps one of the most important strategic initiatives we have been involved in. To date it has generally been viewed as an Operational issue, but the opportunities and implications of CFM are, in fact, much wider. CFM is an organisational issue" (Memo from CFM manager titled " Management Development, CFM Awareness Seminars" 10th April 1992)
>
> "It is time that the Catgut Cell consider the concept of continuous improvement" (CFM Meeting 27th August 1992).

The mixing of metaphors such as "team", "market" and "customer" provided an important means of combining the two rival texts and bringing into play ideas which had meanings within different realities, notably an understanding that a concern with personal growth and employee involvement would result in greater organisational efficiency. Redefinition of the importance of CFM to organisational performance, was reflected in a written statement presented in the "Operations Strategic Plan" shown below. It comprised a strategic vision, mission and key objectives, and was communicated on notice boards and in a series of "directors briefings"[45] run jointly by the operations and personnel directors, which aimed to create a common language and common interests amongst managers and beyond to the shopfloor.

Table 4.5

Our Strategic Vision	**Our Strategic Mission**
"Our Goal is to be the best Health Care Company in the World in everything we do, through a process of Customer-Driven Continuous Improvement"	1 To provide our customers with a comprehensive range of Quality Suture and End- Surgery Products; ensure complete customer satisfaction and aid the advancement of surgery.
Our Key Objectives and strategies 1. Improve Customer Satisfaction 2. Generate Volume Demand 3. Reduce Costs 4. Develop / Introduce New Products 5. Develop Human Resources 6. Implement Endo – Surgical Strategy 7. Implement Global Sourcing strategy	2 To maintain and develop our role as a major manufacturing source and to assist Affiliates develop the Ethicon Franchise world-wide.

[45] Factory briefings held on the shopfloor.

Factory briefings (March and April 1992) offered a series of metaphors used to generate shared images of the future and downplay differences of interests between different levels and functions of management, and between management and workers.

The "market" metaphor provided the business case for change and was used to generate support and understanding from traditional production operators to their pending transfer into cells, and which was to take place on a "voluntary" basis;

> "CFM is a major company policy, our survival depends on it. (...) Our customers and our competitors are forcing Ethicon Ltd to act swiftly as a world-class relay team and to adopt our new strategy of cell team working. It is important to know that becoming a member of a Cell is ultimately not a matter of choice; it is a matter of necessity created by our Customers' needs, and the need to compete effectively in the marketplace". (Directors Briefing, March 1992: 8)

This unitarist statement implied that organisational goals and the means to achieve them were not open to negotiation. Supported by use of the "team" metaphor it ignored the prevailing culture of "us and them" seeking to create an image of the organisation as a kind of team, united by the concern to improve "competitive advantage. Challenging tendencies amongst operators to think as individuals rather as part of a "team", much was made of the " need for special training necessary for multi-skilling, for problem solving, teambuilding and so on"(Briefing, March 1982). Briefings concluded with an articulation of a future vision of teamworking that promised more autonomy for cell operators, and more varied work;

> "In time, after full training, we visualise cell members being able to make many of their own decisions within the team - how to organise themselves - to plan training events, to help colleagues, and so on. That's what employee empowerment means - just trusting employees to help manage themselves".

Having helped build a clearer vision and more receptive climate for change within the organisation personnel managers began to work more closely with their line colleagues to develop policies for the recruitment and reward of cell operators in support of the espoused culture. Analysis of these activities is examined below.

4.2.3 Interplay between different levels of conversation and the creation of a new HRM policy mix in support of CFM

Historically, procedures for recruitment and reward were dominated by a "hard contracting" approach (Tyson, 1995: 94). This was manifested in procedures for individual incentive pay in which the effort-reward bargain was made explicit and implied an instrumental attachment to work consistent with "Theory X" attitudes (McGregor, 1960). A key theme underlying conversations of change about new policy initiatives concerned the removal of what change agents referred to as" inbred attitudes and beliefs" associated with this instrumental approach to work, and the development of a "high trust" environment. This was not without difficulty as change processes (largely framed by a "functional" text) that had excluded employees from decision making, were at odds with a vision that encouraged employee interest in their work and which gave them responsibility and job satisfaction. More consistent with this vision was the emergent "constructive" text of HRM that emphasised the development of "soft contracting" (Tyson, 1995) which implies much closer identity of interests between employees and managers.

Change agents drew upon both text types as they negotiated the meanings of new concepts such as quality, flexibility and teamworking in their discussions about recruitment and pay issues, examined below.

The development of policies for reward

The failure to agree amongst managers on a pay policy for pilot operators continued over a period of eight months. Perceived as a critical barrier to any further establishment of cells the steering group decided that "no further cells are to be established until the payment question can be resolved " (Steering Group minutes, 5th June 1991). A "Remuneration Sub-committee" was subsequently formed that comprised a cross-section of work-study, production and personnel managers only with no representation from the shopfloor[46].

Discussions within the new committee centred on a "CFM philosophy" document prepared by the CFM manager shown in table 4.6, and continued to be dominated by a

[46] It comprised a cross-section of work-study, production and personnel managers only with no representation from the shopfloor.

"functional" text concerned with the effective utilisation of materials and human resources. Nevertheless it was recognised that achieving quality standards and flexible responses amongst operators to variations in day-to-day production requirements meant the need for an exercise of greater employee discretion and more co-operative work relations. It was from this perspective that the CFM manager emphasised the need for a "paradigm shift" and subsequent " letting go" of traditional managerial roles. This demonstrated an attempt to reopen "strategic" conversations about the philosophy of CFM. Key differences between traditional and continuous flow manufacture were related to;

> "... a management philosophy which encourages an attitude of continuous improvement"
>
> " (...) *operators* improving the process using their QUIP skills, operator responsibility for their own quality and operational benefits associated with reduced WIP and lead times. "

The current pay system was perceived as a significant barrier to achieving processes of continuous improvement and the replacement of individual incentives with a team bonus seen to provide an important catalyst to a shift in employee attitudes and values.

Table 4.6 Traditional manufacture versus CFM
"CFM philosophy" statement forwarded to members of CFM stating group, March 1991

Traditional view	**CFM view**
Highly specialised operators	Multi-skilled operators
Keep machines busy	Keep machines available
Management improve the process	Operators improve the process using their quality improvement skills
Make the stock	Make to customer demand
Push material	- Pull material, only when required
"Farm layout"	Flexible manufacturing cells
High WIP (hide problems)	Low work in progress to expose and eliminate problems
Appraisal inspection ie after the event	Prevention, with operators responsible for their own quality
Complex production control	Simple production control (Kanban)
Acceptable quality level	Zero defects

A "trial" pay system was subsequently established for cells in September 1991, in which all cell operators were paid a common basic salary plus a group incentive based on

quality, lead time and output as shown in the table below. The team bonus was a combination of everyone's performance in output, quality and lead time over a period of a fortnight (in the cell).

This new reward structure signified a re-articulation of HRM discourse that represented a combination of conflicting assumptions about the nature of work and the role of the individual. The single job rate symbolised a fundamental break away from the specialisation of tasks and a move towards multiskilling that could represent an attempt by management to intensify work *or* to improve its character. The group bonus also challenged the language of individualism that had characterised incentive pay to date but was more obviously associated with the development of co-operative work relations and Theory Y attitudes and assumptions (McGregor, 1960).

Table 4.7 Reward System for Cells

Traditional system			**New system for cells**		
Job title	Grade [47]	Incentive	Job title	Grade	Incentive *
Attacher Class A	R	Individual bonus based on output	Multi-skilled operator	All placed on grade R	Cell bonus based on: output: 30% quality : 30% lead time : 40%
Attacher Class B	T				
Winder Foil operator	T S				

* Output and quality were calculated by each member completing a worksheet and a quality sheet from which the minutes earned and a quality score were calculated respectively. The measure for lead time was designed to measure the speed of the product through the cell, compared to a target, with the aim of improving customer satisfaction.

As pilot cell operators gained experience of the new pay policy it exposed them to alternate meanings of "teamworking" than that portrayed by the soft rhetoric of HRM during the recruitment stage, or symbolised by the new pay system. This included a

[47] Job rate R was the highest grade paid to highly skilled needle attachers.

loss of status and earnings amongst "high flyers", limited opportunities for task flexibility, and problems in calculating individual earnings (the team bonus was based on a combination of performance across two or three shift groups within each cell). Team leader/leading hands in charge of the pilot cell illustrate the latter issue below;

> "When the girls were in the traditional area, if they were attaching say, they could sit down at an attaching press and look at what batch they were on, see what the standard minute value was for that, and see how many they had to do to get whatever performance they wanted, say it was 110 or 120, and they would work to that and they knew, probably to a penny, what they would get paid" (team leader).

> "There is nothing like that in the cell. The girls cannot calculate or work out what they will be paid as a team. They can work out their own individual performance, but can't relate this to the whole team performance and bonus pay. Feelings are running high about this right now" (leading hand).

Shopfloor experience of the new pay policy also generated new meanings of the term "team" in which the immediate work (shift) group was viewed as a team rather than the cell as a whole. This contrasted with the sense of the term use by change agents in which the product cell was believed to be a team, reflected in a bonus scheme that was based on aggregate performance across all shift groups. A team leader explained how one shift group's productivity could be adversely affected by another shift and vice versa, highlighting tensions associated with these different perceptions;

> "Last week, one of our day shift operators was going off on maternity leave and there was the usual show of presents. Everyone makes a big fuss in here about these sorts of things - there were people running up and down stairs leading to the car, that sort of thing. Performance on the day shift that day was terrible, and this drop in performance affected targets for the whole cell; yet the night shift workers who never see the day shift, didn't know the girl going on leave and had nothing to do with the presentation" (Team leader).

In this context the values of acting in ones own interests rather than the cell or shift group remained strong, reflected in complaints by operators that;

> "The cell bonus is unfair in so far as the above average performers in the cell are paid the same bonus as below average performers" (Internal memorandum from assistant production manager to remunerations sub-committee 4 September 1991).

The discontent felt amongst cell operators was manifested by the "capping of performance" amongst the potentially high performers, followed by an overall fall in productivity of the pilot cell (Compensation manager). Moreover concern was formally

expressed during factory briefing sessions at the lack of multi-skilling, absence of employee involvement in changes taking place, and the need for operators to acquire " more ownership of the cell if it was to work" (Memorandum, 4th September 1991).

These conflicts of interests were downplayed as pilot cell operators were instructed not to "dismiss the new payment system" without giving it "a full trial" (Internal memorandum to remunerations sub-committee, September 1991). Meanwhile change instigators and their supporters carefully shaped the production and interpretation of HRM text during a second series of briefing sessions between production managers and industrial staff which allowed them to continue "selling" a positive image of CFM to organisation members. These processes of discursive closure were central to the creation of shared interpretations of CFM upon which voluntary transfer of operators into new cells depended, and is examined below.

End of pilot phase: recruitment procedures for the establishment of new cells

Having formalised pay procedures for cell working the steering group agreed to progress with the CFM initiative. In April 1992, nearly two years after launching the pilot cell, two new cells were established (Prolene and Vycril), and by December of that year a total of six cells were in operation producing Catgut, Micro Resin, Vicryl Relay and Prolene Relay products. These comprised thirty two percent (over two hundred) operating staff, and the objective was to establish approximately twelve product cells, employing eighty percent of production within the next five years.

As sales forecasts improved Ethicon expanded its manufacturing capacity and began to recruit external as well as internal recruits into cells although the latter mostly staffed the new cells. External recruits were initially placed on traditional assembly line work with the proviso that they would be transferred to cells as and when these were established. In contrast to the recruitment of pilot cell operators, procedures for recruiting and selecting staff for these new cells indicated a "soft contracting" approach, which implies the development of an internal labour market and more sophisticated procedures for manpower planning and selection (Tyson, 1995). Current economic and labour market conditions and introduction of the government funded "SRI initiative"

were important influences upon this dynamic. The "loose" labour market in which Ethicon operated allowed the organisation to be highly selective in its recruitment of staff and in the manner extolled by SRI Inc consultants which focused on establishing a closer "fit" between current employees, newcomers and the espoused new culture.

Like earlier consultants employed from APL, SRI representatives became important suppliers of labels and metaphors that were used by change agents to create and recreate their own definitions of HRM. Data showed how line and personnel managers worked with consultants to reach a common understanding of key themes designed to reflect cell and team requirements. These included "belief", "pride", "responsibility", "empathy" and "team". The latter was defined as "the ability to build mutually supportive relationships with cell workers". Team was to be "demonstrated by being friendly, helpful, liking co-workers and been liked to them" (Internal Report, May 1983: 39). The new screening instrument was used in the recruitment of all new cells noted above. Sensitive handling of internal transfer of staff was important in order to minimise the potential for stress amongst older serving employees who might feel threatened by the requirement to learn new skills and/or the new psychometric assessment of their "team playing potential".

Recruitment notices and directors briefing sessions to employees were carefully managed to create images of a new form of work that was more interesting and rewarding than traditional manufacturing arrangements, and signalled a clear break away from the old engineering discourse. Importantly the screening instrument provided new expressions that built upon the earlier definition of teamworking outlined at factory briefings, and were implied in managerial and operational conversations about the development and implementation of HRM strategies to support the new product cells. New terms were created such as "working as a team", "team training" and the need to develop "team player attitudes" that not only helped recruiters conjure a picture of the "ideal cell operator", but provided a platform from which shared definitions of teamworking could be developed amongst organisation members. SRI information was also seen to provide opportunities to develop a "data bank-a means of matching employees to the optimum people "mix" for each future cell" ("CFM People Strategy"

document) reflecting the potential of recruitment and selection activities to act as both "hard" as well as "soft" mechanisms for change.

The soft rhetoric of teamworking became commonplace in managerial conversations, reflected in committee meeting minutes and correspondence between managers about a recruitment strategy for cells. Job titles for cell operators were re-labelled "Team Member", and briefing notices to applicants promised opportunities for teamworking, increased autonomy and more varied work;

- opportunity to enjoy togetherness feeling of being in a close-knit team.
- given special training in team building, problem solving, how to enjoy putting into practice some of the team's ideas.
- will be given more variety of work and be trained in other tasks for which you are suited" (Briefing notice to CFM applicants).[48]

Discursive practices noted above helped to construct a "set overlap" between advocates of teamworking and the shopfloor. Managers responsible for administering the SRI test explained that the new recruitment procedures stimulated high expectations amongst production operators leading to a high number of applications for internal transfer into cells;

> "Approximately one hundred and five people have applied to join the Prolene Relay Cell that was the first of the new cells to be established and which included the "six principle signatories to the recent Class A attaching grievance" (personnel director, "CFM people strategy " document).
>
> "There was a very positive response from traditional workers to advertisement of vacancies within cellular manufacturing (...) They were very fired up about the idea of multi-skilling and getting the opportunity for a bit more variety, a bit more training in their work" (Training and development manager).

Similar comments were made during focus group interviews with leading hands from Prolene and Cobalt cells. While it was recognised that older serving operators may;

> "... just want to come in, sit down and do a job with nothing to worry about except getting their wage packet at the end of the week - but many of the younger girls have bought into the idea of becoming cell workers, mostly because it will provide them with more varied work ".

[48] Alongside new testing procedures "cell preference sheets" were introduced allowing internal applicants to cells to state their preference for working with a particular product, and interest in helping train and /or select team members.

These accounts indicate that operator engagement in a process that tested their potential to be a "team player" coupled with advertisements that projected a more promising new ideology did have some effect on creating a common and positive "world view" of CFM. However this managerialist "world view" of the employment relationship was soon open to competing definitions amongst industrial staff, as explained in the next section.

Work experience in the new cells and the deconstruction of CFM

It was explained above that the new batch of "volunteers" for cell working, recruited in early 1992, had been persuaded to believe that the espoused vision of CFM was obtainable, or were at least prepared to accept the rhetoric on a "wait and see basis". Consistent with Collin's thesis (1999), it appeared relatively easy for change agents to construct a "set overlap" between the parties involved during the early implementation stage. As Collins observes, it is difficult to be "against" a new work regime that offers more interesting and varied work. It was only when an increasing number of operators experienced cell working at first hand that they were more able to deconstruct management's preferred version of CFM and notions of teamworking. Data revealed that operators quickly found that once transferred to cell work they continued to work much as they did in their original departments, and team leaders made only minimal concessions to participative management;

> "People sit independently and do their bit. They will talk about a collective product, or to their team leader, but essentially if you are a needle attacher, then that is what you are doing" (Head of resourcing).

Multi-skilling largely depended on current workloads and a traditional management style that reflected an understanding amongst many team leaders that;

> "Where people are good at needle attaching, there is no point on putting them onto winding if they can do more for the group on needle attaching" (leading hand)

Lack of functional flexibility exacerbated an emerging discontent amongst operators about the grading system and team bonus arrangements. Ex "class A" needle attachers expressed the most concern, and their disruption potential became evident in a fall in production and an increase in absence levels. The compensations manager explained

that these operators were central to the production process and described how their resistance shaped the new pay policy;

> "The original (pilot) cell had only one class A needle attacher, and while the new cells being established employed more people on this grade, the fact that only a small percentage of operators might lose out financially in the short term was not seen to be a problem. Yet it soon became apparent that our future development of skills depended upon, class A attachers buying into the idea of cell working.
>
> They had two main concerns. One, their potential earnings were going to be eroded by a team bonus which was based on averaged performances in the cell. The other concern was that they were on job rate R already, and were therefore not entitled to an increase in their basic salary. Other cell members on a lower rated scale, winders for example, were going to be moving up one or two rates; and were not demanded to learn an R rated skill immediately, some of them never".[49]

A range of measures were introduced to offset the anomalies described above. These included the provision of one-off payments in recognition of past differentials that no longer existed, and phased earnings payments to those whose individual bonuses were higher than their future cell earnings. While these measures offset the immediate concerns of the most powerful cell operators they did not address a basic "felt need" amongst operators to be able to calculate their own earnings. In the words of one team leader;

> "Ethicon trained these people to think money wise, as we said before, if they produced, they got paid. That is what they are looking for. The girls were quite happy to take on extra responsibility, quality wise, other duties and that, but they wanted a payment scheme they could understand. One which was clearly linked to output. And that is not in place"

The metaphor "thinking money wise" creates a powerful image of operator experience of the traditional management regime and an entrenched instrumentalism towards work. Ironically, it was unlikely that attitudes and behaviours associated with this would change until operators actually experienced the collective form of work organisation signified by the complex pay system. The following section examines the negotiated interactions between change agents and organisational participants as fresh attempts were made to create shared definitions of teamworking within cells.

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[49] These circumstances led to frustration not only amongst cell operators themselves but also traditional workers who in some cases were paid two job grades lower than colleagues doing similar work in cells.

4.3 Transforming HRM at Ethicon

This section examines the second phase of change at Ethicon, which was characterised by multiplication of new meanings as strategies were formed and further production teams established. In light of the circumstances explained in the previous section, line managers on the Steering Group had become aware that culture change was more difficult than had first been anticipated, and that a shift in norms and values could not be achieved through structural changes alone. While system changes had helped communicate the espoused new culture, they needed to be reinforced by "softer" change mechanisms that targeted individual cognitions amongst managers/team leaders and shopfloor workers. The following comments illustrated this shift in approach to change that focused on winning "hearts and minds" (Personnel director);

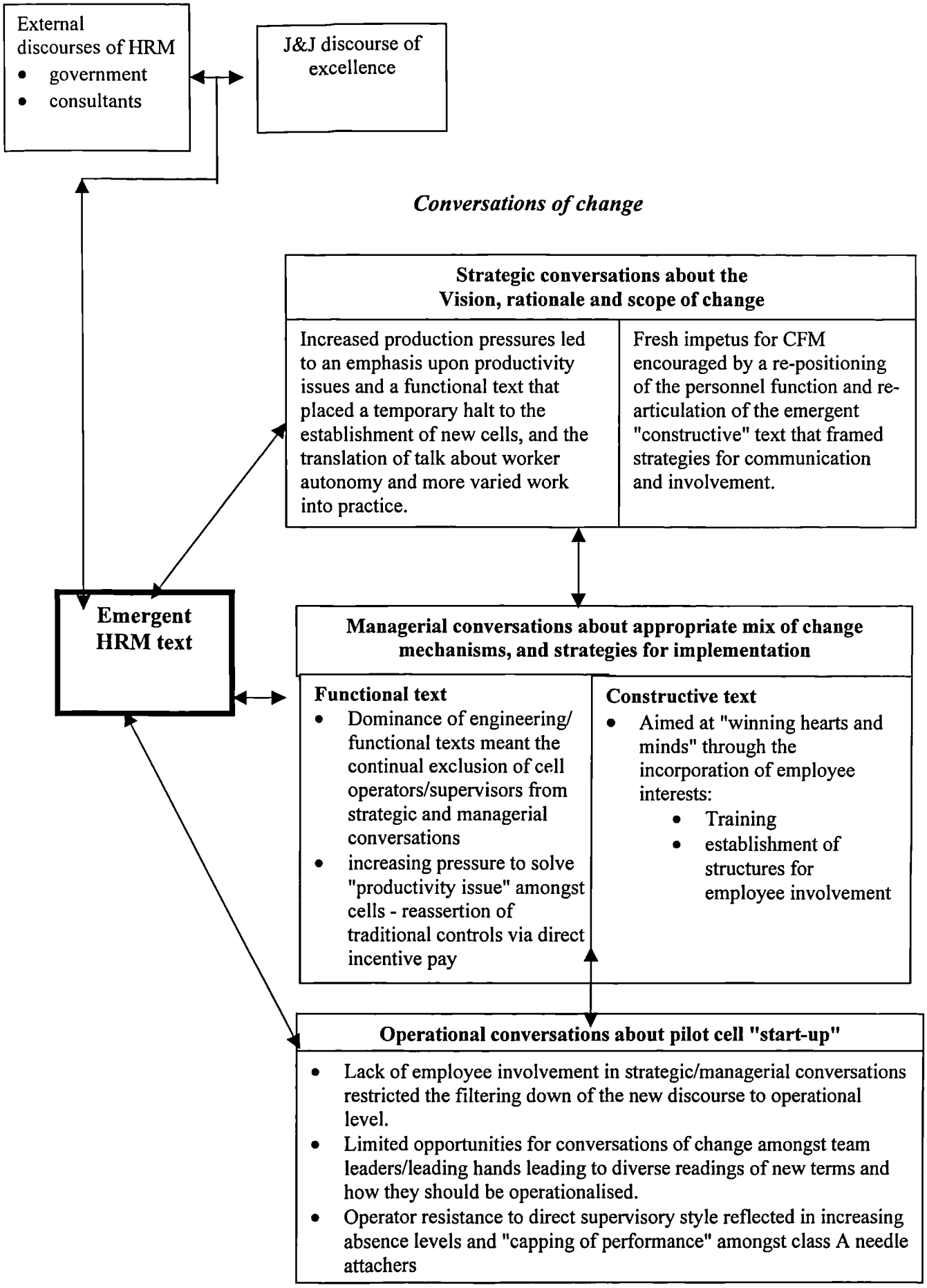
> "More time should have been spend preparing the hearts and minds of people so that they understand and are more receptive to change" (personnel director).

> "We now recognise that you can't just throw people together and expect teams to be successful. We've got to develop some way towards making that team work together, getting them to understand why they are there and selling the idea of CFM to operators"(operations manager).

> "We could have spread the word more widely across the company and the amongst board members such that they were aware and in support of what we were doing. While there was agreement at Board level that the operations department go ahead with CFM, there wasn't as clear an understanding as to how important it was, or how it could be developed" (Operations director).

Figure 4.3

Phase two: Transformation of HRM



4.3.1 HRM as a medium in the creation of a shared reality

The personnel director assumed a significant role in the development of a fresh approach to change, and was a key author in the writing of an implementation strategy which re-emphasised the principles of CFM "marketed" during phase one of change. Labelled "CFM Cells - People Strategy", this was largely framed by an emergent "constructive" text that focused on the need to develop "soft" change mechanisms which gave primacy to the creation of a homogeneity of meaning across different levels of workplace conversation.

The new strategy for change was targeted at all levels within the company, but first aimed to address attitudes and beliefs held amongst senior, middle and junior managers "who remained attached to the old style of management" (personnel director). A statement in the strategy document formally recognised differences in interests amongst these groups and the need was emphasised for change agents to manage organisational politics arising from this, as outlined below;

> "We must also be certain that all manufacturing line management, from supervisors upwards, are as truly committed as their senior management to the full Company strategy of Cell working and all that this means. For despite assurances, it has to be said that a significant element of middle and junior line management are clinging, perhaps understandably, to a belief that yesterday's thinking will prevail - that multi-skilling will not actually take place - that Employee Empowerment will never happen - that the role of line management will remain unassailably dictatorial.
>
> "We must strike this iron while it's hot. The "iron" of employee attitude towards Cells is currently malleable and glowing red. If we delay, attitude will cool and harden again, and there may be those with vested interests in the status quo who would pour cold water for this very purpose. If we strike fast but crudely, attitude will assume that overall shape forever. On the other hand, if we move professionally, sensitively and quickly, we can ensure a flexible, mobile, cellular workforce of world class calibre" (CFM people strategy document).

Through a mix of metaphors, the personnel director presents forceful arguments for a change in line management attitudes thinking and behaviour. "Clinging" in conjunction with "yesterday thinking", emphasises relations of contestation and struggle between the "old" and "new" discourses and the ascendancy of the latter. "Striking while the iron is hot" and "glowing red" expresses a sense of urgency for change, reinforced by images

of "pouring cold water" and "hardening of attitudes" if change agents failed to act quickly and in unison. The latter point is emphasised further in the following statement that reinforced the personnel director's declaration about the need for "culture change" and the importance of "development".

> "The move from individual incentive to Cell team-working, with all its potential, involves more than mere training. A culture change is necessary – a shift in attitudes and values". (...) Hopefully this input plus a very positive face to face indicator from both operations and personnel directors at Ethicon will convince any management doubters that employee empowerment within cells is a lot more than a mere idea".

"Mere training" and "mere idea" reflect an appeal for the re-ordering of discursive practices and mechanisms for culture change that could signal a fundamental shift away from a "functional" to "constructive" text and HRM practices. The strategy document referred to "an urgent need to take observable action on communications, recruitment, training, development and payment".

Communication and training were viewed as important mechanisms for announcing and explaining "short term but also mid and long (two-year) term objectives", and generating "acquiescence and enthusiasm for change". Acceptance of change was seen to rely "heavily on early, clear awareness communication", followed by training and development practices that went beyond skills training and aimed to enable people to change their attitudes and behaviours as well as gaining ownership of the change.

These recommendations represented a significant break away from traditional training programmes that focused on skills, roles and responsibilities rather than values and attitudes. Nevertheless the principal purpose of these change mechanisms was "educative", designed to persuade operators of the logic of management decisions and ideas as well as its long-term vision. While emphasis was placed on understanding and commitment, there remained an absence of mechanisms that could facilitate a flow of ideas up the hierarchy and enhance the contribution of employees to strategic or managerial conversations about CFM. It was within this context that APL consultants were invited to run one- day seminars on "CFM awareness ". These were held early in

1992 for managers, support staff, and team leaders, and were to be extended to shopfloor workers later that year. [50]

Workshops were largely educative in nature and included a seminar on " Why CFM?" and a practical exercise called the "JIT game". Activities were framed by a unitarist rhetoric that reproduced and built upon an HRM text that APL had helped create during the early design stage of change. This was dominated by a "constructive" text aimed at integrating the interests of managers and subordinates with the assumption that cell operators would contribute to management decisions and in so doing enhance processes of continuous improvement and organisational performance.

The paradox evident in the absence of employee involvement in management decision making on the one hand, and training programmes that talked of employee empowerment on the other has been neatly summed up by Marchington;

> "Senior management has now decided that it is time for all employees to be empowered, and have devised a scheme for achieving this. You will now participate!" (Marchington, 1995: 63).

APL trainers also made recourse to plain speaking (Kamoche 1995a) in order to prescribe a particular definition of CFM that offered little or no room for ambiguity, or expression of employee concerns, illustrated in the following excerpt from their training manual;

> "You will see that the things we are going to be talking about do not depend on being Japanese or making cars. They are simple, straight-forward concepts, many of which originated in Western Europe and America. (...) (CFM Training Programme: Awareness Sessions, April 1992).

Characteristic of "initiative conversations" (Ford and Ford, 1995) consultants made use of assertions, declarations and promises in order to create a particular "world view" of CFM;

> (*assertions*) "The impact that successful implementation can have on a company is phenomenal. Toyota's manufacturing costs are 30 percent lower than Western

[50] There remained no representation from shopfloor workers on the steering group or its sub-committees. Employee "voice" was restricted to large scale briefing sessions held between senior managers and operators on the shopfloor, a formal grievance procedure and an "open line" system in which individuals could raise matters of concern directly to senior management.

> car companies. (...) Companies in many industries, with products ranging from forged metal components to complex electronic assemblies, have been equally successful in achieving outstanding results"
>
> (*Promises)* "The addition of employee contributions to the business goals of best quality and delivery with lowest manufacturing costs is not just a nod to employee involvement. In the CFM production system, employees are given much broader responsibility and authority, are trained in many technical disciplines necessary to the effective exercise of such responsibility and authority, and are kept informed on the performance of their operators"
>
> (*Request*) Much of the success of the system comes from employee efforts to improve this performance. The sense of contribution is earned and deserved. (CFM Training Programme: Awareness Sessions, April 1992)

Focus group discussions with team leaders and leading hands indicated that younger serving leading hands and team leaders reacted positively to the language of HRM and image of CFM promoted at training workshops. In the opinion of two (of the younger serving) team leaders from the Prolene and Vycril cells;

> "They (trainers) talked about the usual stuff you hear about CFM ie to develop employees within the cell, and to allow them to realise their potential. I was very excited about it all and very enthusiastic. They gave you a good insight into CFM or just-in-time, and showed you videos of other firms who had taken it on board".
>
> Yes, we thought CFM would be a great opportunity for operators; that they would learn more skills, do some supervisory work, clerical work. And they were all for it. Expectations were high. Operators moving into cells were looking forward to multi-skilling not only on the suture assembly side, but also in clerical duties (control of absence, holidays)".

Consistent with Grant's work about the role of management rhetoric, the language of HRM helped to encourage some operators to put aside their perceptions of past experiences and to engage in a "trial psychological contract" (Grant, 1999: 343). This does not mean that past experiences are disregarded, but that employees are willing to believe in the rhetoric, thus giving it "a chance to prove itself and become reality". In the Ethicon case younger serving cell operators who perhaps had most to gain from the new "reality" were willing to put aside the pay issue for the time being and engage in a rhetoric that offered them more interesting and challenging work.

Longer serving employees, notably those amongst the ranks of supervisor and middle manager, were less likely to "buy into" the ideal of CFM according to respondents interviewed, and the reasons for this are examined below in a further analysis of the political dynamics change.

4.3.2 Political dynamics and reassertion of traditional values

Despite ambiguity concerning the exact definition of CFM the head of resourcing explained that it represented a significant change for the supervisory function and that team leaders were expected to play a pivotal role in the smooth transfer from traditional to cell working. Yet the average age of supervisors was forty-one years, and average service twelve years. Described as being "handicapped by long service" and unable to "let go" he explained that most supervisors had been promoted to their position because of their technical competence, and felt that they lacked competence in the softer people oriented skills. Younger supervisors, recently transferred to the position of cell team leader expressed similar sentiments;

> "If you get someone who has been a supervisor for a long time - being this strong domineering type- it is very difficult for them to break away from that, and try to think that they are there to facilitate, and make sure that their teams are working as they should be".
>
> "It is very difficult to change people from this mould".

A range of further explanations raised by respondents of supervisory resistance to employee empowerment, is consistent with earlier research findings and included questions of status, job insecurity, insufficient training, lack of involvement and/or doubts about the philosophy of empowerment (Klein, 1984; Denham et al., 1997; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Fenton-O'Creevy and Nicholson, 1994; Wilkinson et al., 1993). Some respondents suggested that the risk of technical expertise being lost to lower levels instilled a fear amongst team leaders of relinquishing their status, and of becoming redundant. A more common theme was that training sessions had paid inadequate attention to the development of people management skills or contribution of team leaders to strategic/managerial conversations.

Consistent with the view that skills are constituted in conversation (Hardy et al., 1998), respondents referred to "a lack of time", "a lack of guidance", "and a lack of discussion" about the role of the team leader and leading hand during training sessions. For these participants, workshops failed to provide a critical forum within which collective understandings of the kind of people skills required to manage cells could be developed;

> "They gave you a good insight into CFM (...). But the training did not go far enough. There wasn't enough discussion about managing a cell. We needed to learn how to make the transition from supervisor to facilitator, how to encourage people rather than being the dominant supervisor".
>
> Yes, expectations were high (...) I would agree with Stan though, that we were not given enough guidance about how to manage people in cells".

Data revealed that problems in the development of a collective construction of shared meanings amongst supervisors was exacerbated by their exclusion from those strategic and managerial conversations which preceded decisions about the intended nature of the CFM initiative and plans for implementation. Top management had not involved supervisors in the initial design stage of change, nor in the development of HRM strategies in support of CFM. Both team leaders and leading hands referred to "poor communications " on the part of top management and "no involvement from people like us as decisions are made", yet were expected to administer some sort of employee participation within cells.

This problem might have been alleviated by the establishment of "horizontal coalitions", allowing for team leaders/ leading hands to interpret their own local tactics from an integrated perspective (Westley, 1990: 343). However respondents talked of their relative isolation compared to traditional arrangements, under the new management regime, which excluded them from conversations about the philosophy and practice of CFM. Team leaders from Vicryl, Prolene and Catgut cells explained that;

> "Before, if something came up you would always have a foreman you could bounce ideas off and get his feelings, and see what was there. That has been taken away in the new manufacturing areas. We as team leaders are now left more or less without anyone between ourselves and senior management".
>
> "Plus, you are on your own in a cell, apart from not having a foreman, you don't have any supervisory colleagues. In the traditional areas where there is something going on, you can have two, three or four supervisors working in that

area, all working together, but when you go into a cell you are in there on your own; and some have continued very much as they did before".

Similar experiences were described by leading hands from the Catgut and Prolene cells who described the emergence of an array of local meanings as leading hands and their team leaders created their own interpretations of CFM in the absence of pre-defined job descriptions, competencies, and shared conversations amongst peers;[51]

> "No one actually gave it (extra responsibility) to you, you just took it on board. In my instance I was given more or less a free reign on the day shift and I don't think that anybody had defined what a leading hand should do in a cell. It just developed from there." (Leading hand 1)

> "Everybody was more or less getting on with it as they think fit; maybe there are certain guidelines where we should be going. People that are doing it different ways might be better going another way. The communications side of things is ...nil." (Leading hand 2)

> "Everyone is more or less getting on with it as they think fit, some cells enjoy a degree of autonomy, others are managed in the traditional way" (Leading hand 3).

These statements highlight the significance of conversation as a medium in the continuous process of learning and negotiation of meanings at the workplace. Importantly, the lack of supervisor involvement in both strategic and managerial conversations as well as ongoing conversation with peers, acted as a significant barrier to the filtering down and diffusion of HRM text at local level. This dynamic was also influenced by a management accountancy system that acted as a significant barrier to the incorporation of the new discourse into everyday social relations.

The accounting system emerged from respondents' accounts of change as a major cultural artefact or "totem" (Berg, 1986) in which traditional norms and values were embedded. Importantly it embodied the vocabulary, phrases and expressions indicative of the engineering discourse and emergent functional text of HRM, and in the words of one respondent acted as "strait-jacket" to the development of CFM.

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[51] As team leader responsibility spanned across two or three shifts, leading hands began to assume more day-to-day management of the shift group. This meant shedding much of the routine work based on fixing machines, to the planning of batches and weekly work, and liasing with purchasing and stores about availability of components. The team leader retained responsibility for decisions about multi-skilling and the extent to which employees were allowed to engage in non direct work.

The personnel director explained that managers were very aware that their performance was censured by negative variances, and production managers in particular were said to spend a lot of time; "... chasing the origins of the nature of negative variances to satisfy the accountants who manage these". As a result cost accounting procedures imposed a system of priorities and accountancy logic that made it very difficult for team leaders to translate HRM rhetoric into practice, illustrated by the following statements;

> "If they (management) want it to be a cell and work according to the theory of how a cell should work, then they have got to allow for this. The accounting system doesn't help. There are people saying no, we can't have them doing that, we have got to put them on direct time or whatever, related to output and targets" (Leading hand).
>
> "Another responsibility the team leaders have taken on, is monitoring the percentage time the girls are on direct work. At the moment the way the accounting system is set up, if we have a direct productive operator producing pieces but doing anything else like clerical work or machine setting, it shows up as a cost, a negative variance.
>
> *(Interviewer) So the cost accounting system does not help you develop team members in these skills?*
>
> No, definitely not. Because we now have responsibility to keep our target, and this is a given; to maintain total time on direct incentive (...) The current system does not take account of indirect work such as time out for team development."

Similar perceptions were articulated by change agents on the CFM Group who noted that certain members of the senior team and more junior managers had yet to be "brought fully on board" and that they remained attached to bureacratic controls embedded in traditional cost accounting procedures. In their accounts of change they talked of the reluctance of line management who were judged on output, to allow operators to be released from direct production duties in order to attend team briefing sessions, training workshops and become involved in team governance issues;

> "We need to free up people that are caught up in conventional accountancy techniques allowing them to be more proactive and not just keeping score on what variances have occurred. " (Manager, Employee Development)
>
> "current accounting procedures do not allow team leaders to delegate certain clerical duties which currently would be regarded as a negative variance" (Personnel Director)

Within the constraints noted above, cells continued to operate much like "mini-departments" and productivity continued to be unpredictable, influenced by a continuation of the "capping of performance" amongst the most highly skilled operators (Committee Minutes, 10th March 1993). Change agents were placed under increasing pressure to solve the "productivity issue" leading to a reassertion of a functional text concerned with ways in which the payment system could be altered in order to "force" a change in attitudes and behaviours on the shopfloor. The outcome was an agreement to alter bonus arrangements, and weightings were changed to reflect five per cent lead time; eighty per cent output and fifteen per cent quality.

While the steering group recorded these changes as being " Beneficial to the company and to employees who wanted more emphasis on output" (Steering Group minutes, 18th March 1993) personnel respondents remarked that they did little to symbolise a break away from "inbred attitudes" and an instrumental approach to work. Decision making continued to be dominated by a functional text embedded in an accountancy logic, short term production requirements and conversations about altering the reward structure, rather than the development of a constructive text and set of change mechanisms outlined by the " CFM-People Strategy" document.

4.3.3 The dynamics of change vis-a-vis external social structures

Consistent with findings of phase one of change, the dynamics of change were closely linked to the interplay between macro-and micro-social structures and local power relations of the kind noted above. Of particular significance at this time were the effects of corporate restructuring and intensified competition within the health sector which altered the "push"/"pull" dynamic examined earlier, and illustrated in figure 4.2.

Intensified competition and the external labour market

Following the restructuring of suture manufacturing in Europe, Ethicon was required to produce less Vicryl products that operators found easy to handle, and more of the less popular Prolene material which was more sensitive to work with and which became a key raw material for products cells. This influx of Prolene material into cells, coupled

by a growing disillusionment amongst cell operators of the new management regime, discouraged operators in traditional areas to apply for vacant cell positions. However, competitive and labour market imperatives acted as useful "push" factors for change used to persuade operators to "volunteer" for transfer into cells.

Because of the kind of labour market within which Ethicon operated (page 110) advertisements for cell operators at Ethicon attracted a large numbers of applicants during the winter of 1992/93, placing managers in a "buyers' market". Moreover heightened competition within the industry provided a convenient backdrop against which change instigators could place responsibility on employees as well as management for the success of the business. Used in conjunction with the "market" metaphor, statements about the status of the current labour market created a "threat effect" amongst current staff of not complying with management wishes;

> "We can guarantee that established Ethicon employees can be sure of a place somewhere within the CFM cell structure, provided of course that, as a whole, Ethicon Limited continues to satisfy our customers and bring in sufficient orders for the future employment of us all". (Notice to all staff, Ethicon Ltd and European Manufacturing Harmonisation, 8 December 1992)

> "To be sure of a place in a cell, all employees will have to be ready for compromise (...) If not, our recent advertisement has attracted almost 1,000 external applicants (...) if needs be, we will appoint external candidates, who will naturally be delighted to work in cells with any material"

Corporate restructuring and rationalisation of suture production

A "pull" factor that assumed increasing significance in conversations of change was associated with the rationalisation of suture production noted earlier. Ethicon became the "European centre" for the manufacture of Prolene materials. By the winter of 1993 this was followed by unprecedented production pressures leading to a decision made by the CFM Group later in 1993, to place training and development issues "on the back burner" and to take " time out" from further cell development. This meant that CFM awareness training was not made available to cell operators as planned, a temporary cessation in the establishment of new cells and a halt in the development of current cells.

Plans to create further cells were frozen for a period of seven months, during which time the CFM manager moved onto the European Logistics Team given the remit to develop systems that would make production planning within suture manufacturing more predictable. Under these circumstances team leaders were kept under continual pressure to keep operators on direct work, and to avoid negative variances associated with operators undertaking indirect duties, for example helping sort out holiday rotas and overtime arrangements.

Leading hands described the disillusionment on the shopfloor as traditional values reasserted themselves amongst policy-makers, and the "functional text " continued to dominate day-to-day operating routines;

> "The operations director first came up to the shopfloor and told us what cell working was going to be like i.e. nice and relaxed, with no pressure like the traditional area where you concentrated on output. But it's not like that. The pressure is more intense now, and we have virtually no leeway to let the girls do other duties".
>
> "Yes, and it's like tunnel vision. Even when the girls have not got anything to do, which can happen at the end of the week, they can run out of work waiting on a new plan coming in. Different jobs could be done by these girls. They are looking to do it. It would make them happier, more content."
>
> "I think allowing them to use their second skill is another thing. That is why they moved into the cells to start with, but there is not much opportunity to move around because everything is directed towards putting the faster ones onto certain jobs. So if you are up to speed as a winder, attacher and so on, that is the job they will do most of the time".

Such tight production controls were increasingly recognised as inappropriate by the operations director in an environment in which quality standards and the need for employee discretion was becoming increasingly important, as explained below.

Market pressures and re-ordering of text types

"Time out" from CFM development ceased seven months later as competition within the wound closure industry intensified. Patterson explained that competition was centring on the ability for businesses to shorten delivery times and provide new and more attractive packaging of sutures that was more customer focused than in the past

(Health Industry Today, September 1994). In this context, the top team considered that CFM would become important to the company's continued growth and survival in that it was seen to be critical to the pursuit of high quality products. Emphasising the threat posed by new American competitors entering the market, Patterson understood that;

> "To be able to retain business and win business, we have to be better than the competition. Customer service is probably the key to winning business, more so than ever before, and improvements in this will depend upon our move towards continuous flow manufacturing".

Patterson went on to argue that empowered work groups could play an important part in processes of continuous improvement, although it was acknowledged that this latter benefit of CFM had yet to be realised and had been accrued less importance amongst members of the CFM group. There remained significant variations in perceptions amongst line managers about the extent of flexibility and employee involvement required of cell operators. Patterson remarked that the "hard" benefits associated with CFM noted in table 4.2 (i.e. reduction in lead- time and work in progress), did not necessarily require a high level of operator flexibility and empowerment. Moreover, Ethicon's enhanced status as one of the largest suture finishing manufacturers in Europe, was likely to be attributed to the "old way of working", rather than the partial introduction of CFM. This sentiment was voiced by the manager of operator training who remarked upon the growing disenchantment felt amongst operating staff about the change initiative, and a failure to legitimise a need for culture change at all levels of decision-making;

> "Many people have commented that Ethicon has been very successful up to now, doing things the way we have always done things, why do we need to change at all?"

Under these circumstances a renewed attempt was made by the personnel and operations directors to create conversations for change that would allow for the inclusion of organisational members at all levels and the development of shared understandings about the importance of CFM and employee empowerment. Members of the CFM group recorded the need to gain "buy in" from organisation members that current decision-making processes had failed to achieve. The personnel director emphasised the need for more opportunity for two-way communication and involvement of change recipients in decision-making, described in terms of "*real*

employee involvement" across different levels of management, and beyond to the shopfloor;

> "More time should have been spent preparing the hearts and minds of people so that they understood and were more receptive to change. If we have done this we would have been further down the road now. We're having to revisit that now".

Measures to create opportunities for employee involvement and fresh conversations for change centred round the establishment of task forces as shown in the following table (4.8), and the use of an external consultant who was employed to investigate and report back on employee concerns about the reward system for cells. These mechanisms for change were given a high-profile in the house journal and local briefings to employees, signalling a new participative management style and "bottom-up" approach to change. The newly appointed CFM manager, Dawson, considered that task forces would provide a critical medium for the creation of shared understandings and a common vision grounded in joint discussions between managers and workers. A key task of the CFM implementation team was to address the issue of;

> " No shared vision - no publicised strategy, a lack of common understanding of CFM, and lack of shared goals" (Inaugural meeting: CFM Minutes, 24 March 1994).

Table 4.8 Structures for employee involvement

CFM implementation team: cross section of seventeen employees from a range of functions and all levels within the company, and included the Head of the Development department who had joined the company earlier that year. The committee was chaired by a newly appointed CFM manager, Dawson, given the remit to achieve the conversion of eighty percent traditional workers into cells by the end of 1995 (At the start of 1994 thirty eight percent were in cells, comprising two hundred and seventy nine of the workforce).

Rewards team: comprised nine members, involving a cross section of managers, team leaders and operators from cell and traditional operations. The team was chaired by Stewart, compensation and benefits manager and given a high-profile into the local house journal published in June 1994.

Acknowledging that the top team had "compromised on teamworking", Dawson talked of the need to generate commitment from them and more junior managers to the principles of teamworking and employee empowerment. He explained that his understanding of these terms had been shaped by his past experience in another

manufacturing company of "best practice" in self managing teams, together with exposure to new ideas generated by external consultants. For Dawson, effective teamworking meant expanding operator responsibility beyond making routine decisions to where;

> "You have employees appraising each other, there is peer selection and a high level of communication amongst team members. (...) In my view we need to spend more time encouraging people to work together, taking time out together, just talking about things in the team, in order to reduce costs and to improve quality".

This narrative illustrates the intertextuality of the emergent HRM discourse framing strategies for change. Emphasis is placed on communication and the development and growth of individuals consistent with a "constructive" text. At the same time the talk of "reducing costs" treats teamwork as a vehicle to improve productivity, efficiency and quality, consistent with a "functional" text. Dawson drew upon this text in order to legitimise, in rational analytical terms, the resources being channelled into the training and development of cells. Noting the controlling influence of finance and production disciplines he remarked that it was important that he was able to "visibly demonstrate that empowered teams will work" and "add value" to the business, but that this task was problematic. Consistent with extant research (Hiltrop, 1996), Dawson explained that he was unable to articulate in quantitative terms, how or why his version of teamworking could affect the "bottom line". Attempts to generate support for empowered work groups thus rested on the use of rhetorical language that drew upon both functional and constructive texts in a creative fashion in order to create positive images of CFM amongst different and competing target audiences. These processes are examined in the next section.

4.4 Incorporation of HRM at Ethicon

During the final phase of change (figure 4.4) the newly established CFM implementation team became a key driving force associated with a re-casting of the language and practice of HRM used to generate common understandings and consolidate change. Data revealed that engagement in the use of rhetoric and symbolic actions allowed the possibility of key players on the implementation team to raise the

importance of the contribution of empowered work groups in the eyes of the senior managers even when situational conditions indicated otherwise.

Key players included the head of development (Graham) and CFM manager, Dawson. Both emphasised the need to "manage the politics of change" in an organisation where production pressures remained high and where personnel matters continued to be taken "downstream" to financial and production issues. Political activity in this context centred round gaining support from powerful actors within finance and operations departments by influencing definitions of reality about what contingencies were critical for the organisation. These activities were intimately linked to the development of discursive practices that challenged the dominance of engineering/functional texts, and helped create a new configuration of text types that signified a shift away from a directive to more participative management style.

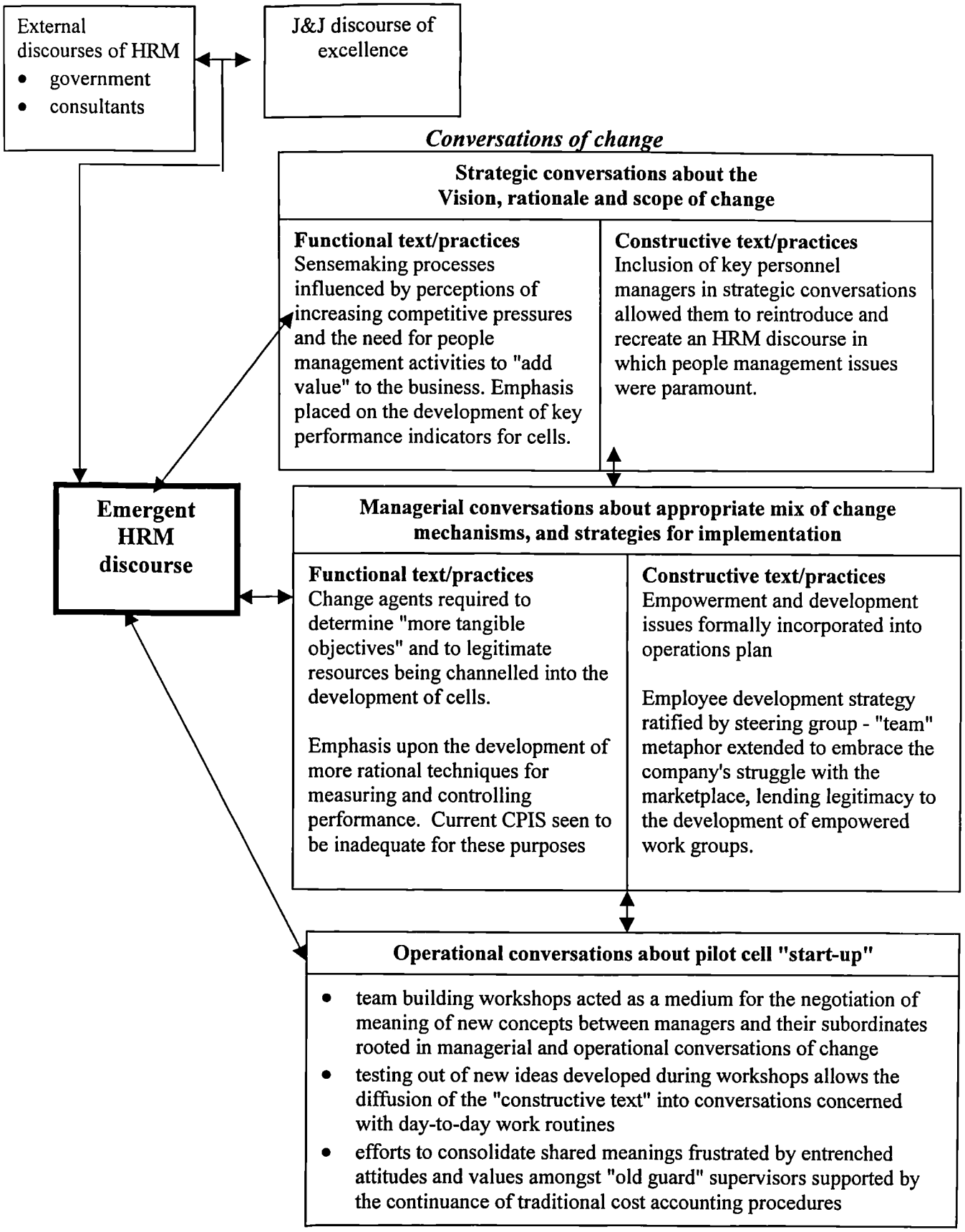
4.4.1 Re-casting HRM

Gaining membership of the CFM steering group in addition to the CFM implementation team, gave Graham and Dawson access to key "power holders" within the company allowing them to reintroduce and recreate at a strategic level, an HRM discourse in which people management issues were paramount. Recognising that key decisions often occurred through informal processes outside formal meetings of the CFM seeking group, Graham talked of breaking into what was described as "the old boy network" and the "inner circle" in which personnel managers were traditionally excluded. Publication of three management reports was illustrative of discursive activity aimed at gaining access to and influencing this "inner circle", each of which will be discussed in turn:

- employee development strategy in support of CFM
- benchmarking best practice in teamworking
- activity based management.

Figure 4.4

Phase three: incorporation of HRM



Like Dawson, Graham drew upon both functional and constructive texts in creative ways in order to generate support from the top team for new modes of discourse and practices that would allow for more open, two-way dialogue between managers and their subordinates. A document distributed to the steering group titled " Employee development strategy in support of CFM" placed emphasis on the need for teambuilding activities that allowed " employees to make greater contributions to the business". Primacy was also given to the market metaphor which centred round notions of "value added", "world class manufacturing", and competitive advantage" and which sought to create the perception amongst members of the steering group that the development of empowered employees was a critical and "strategic" concern.

Images created by this document were reinforced by a second report titled "Benchmarking best practice in teamworking". Undertaken as part of Graham's MBA research (Grant, 1993), this report highlighted "best practice" within a well local known manufacturer of cameras, and signalled the importance of teambuilding to the effective development of cross-functional empowered teams. For Graham, empowerment meant that;

> "Projects must be given to those on the shopfloor right at the start. A norm needs to develop re. getting them involved at the design stage rather than now - when a managerial group are experiencing difficulties in implementation and only then begin to bounce ideas of the shopfloor. This needs to be turned round so that early involvement in decision-making would be an objective (pause)... compensation is an obvious example".

Graham recognised that any shift towards empowerment of the kind described above was undermined by prevailing discursive practices embedded in current cost accounting language and procedures that were diametrically opposed to the development of "empowered" workers;

> "We are running a new process with an old accounting system which fault finds all the time, and which produces variances linked to another form of manufacturing. So your teams, if they take time out, immediately hit these variances. The present system shows this as a massive negative variance, and it is important that this is altered to allow for the development of teams (...). We need to build "time out" into the remuneration system. At the moment there is no factor for indirect time for direct labour being off the job. Any time you take them off the job you hit their variance. I think we need to factorise this in some way, to account for time spent away from the job rather than it very crudely affecting the product".

A third report compiled by Graham titled "Activity based management"(ABM), directly challenged the language embedded in costing procedures at Ethicon by quoting problems reported by the financial controller of Hewlett Packard (HP) at a local seminar. ABM was purportedly introduced at HP " As a direct response to the unhelpful decisions that traditional accountancy systems (such as Standard Costing) tended to support". The report concluded that traditional accountancy systems "are not consistent with or helpful within a World Class Manufacturing environment" (Activity Based Management, 5th April 1993).

The three reports generated by Graham aroused sufficient interest amongst key players within the CFM steering group for her employee development strategy to be approved. The strategy laid out plans to instigate "pilot training" within two of the longer established cells in order that "models of best practice" could emerge and were expected to provide a "blueprint" for further development activities. Importantly, it promised to create new modes of discourse that allowed for a shift away from formal briefing sessions to more conversational consultations between managers and their subordinates, as explained in the next section.

4.4.2 Training as a medium in the production and reproduction of HRM

Pilot training was perceived to be a critical platform from which change agents on the implementation team could begin to build upon the particular image (and text) of CFM presented earlier by the personnel director (CFM People Strategy). Framed by a "constructive" rhetoric of HRM, training plans aimed to meet the following objectives;

> (...) "Achieve greater understanding of the characteristics of effective teams, examine behaviour which may hinder excellent performance, and set out plans to enhance customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction" (Tie-Line Article, September 1994: 11)

This statement signified the need for conversations for understanding and performance of the kind described by Ford and Ford (1995). Graham and Dawson talked of the need to provide an opportunity for operators to examine and "take on board" the principles of teamworking, which meant exploring definitions of new terms and agreeing both

amongst themselves and with their seniors, key performance indicators for "effective cells". Operator training for Prolene and Catgut cells comprised a two-day development workshop run by Graham and her depute designed to facilitate in-depth discussions through the use of group work, role plays and outdoor teambuilding activities.

During these sessions trainees explored their understanding of teamwork, and empowerment, and were asked to reach consensus about what would make for an "effective cell". These findings were presented to a panel[52] at the end of the course allowing participants to engage in managerial and operational conversations with senior/middle managers about the development of resources required to support CFM and appropriate performance indicators.

Data revealed that the inclusion of operators in conversations with senior managers had an "empowering effect" (Hardy et al., 1998), in that it allowed them to challenge current assumptions held by management. One training manager explained that not all managers were prepared to engage in conversations about such things as the "approachability of management, and the "ability to actually change the way things are run in the cell ", and displayed "a lot of defensiveness". Nevertheless she considered that training sessions provided an important forum for "frank and open discussions" about the need for a clearer vision of CFM. This was regarded as vital given that, in her opinion, senior managers attending these sessions understood little about "what is meant by empowerment" and what was believed to be a "team".

Ideas presented by operators about an "effective cell" were grounded in past experiences and compared against the concepts of empowerment and teamworking raised during training sessions. Henderson described processes through which shared understandings developed;

> "Whereas there is no formal model of teamworking a number of common themes are coming through and has helped us develop a "working model". At the end of each training session, team members are asked to reach agreement about what would make for an effective cell. Sometimes their demands are very straightforward including such things as better catering facilities. Other matters

[52] This included the operations director or his manager, and two foremen.

include more "teamy" things, and getting the team leaders to let go. It is not our job to select what is important - they put up what is important to them.

The kind of model of teamworking that they came up with -from people that had never read a text book in their lives - was a lot better than you would expect. They came up with models that emphasised people pulling together, people training each other, and not just the co-ordination type skills. Coaching, doing all their own paperwork, deciding their own holidays, setting their own targets for example"

Data revealed that conversations held during training sessions enabled the development of a collective consciousness and sense of "team" amongst operators that centred on the shift group rather than the cell as a whole, reflected in comments made by one participant about training of his particular shift group;

> "Team training showed us how to work as a team, and how to think as a team, it was brilliant" (Leading hand).

This opinion mirrored written comments made on course evaluation forms completed by shift groups in the Catgut and Prolene cells whose output targets had been exceeded for the month despite losing two full production days for training (CFM Minutes, 25th August 1994). Similar use of the term "team" was apparent in one trainer's account of effective teambuilding, in which she talked of a shift in attitudes and behaviours of cell operators that was not restricted to those who had received "pilot" training, and which indicated a reconfiguration of discourses on the shopfloor;

> "The teams (day shifts)[53] have been working more effectively after training. We know this from feedback from team leaders who have commented that operators are more likely to solve problems for themselves rather than bringing them to him or her (...) Less referrals to the team leaders are also becoming evident amongst the twilight shifts that have yet to undergo specialist training. These shifts are beginning to adopt similar problem solving skills and behaviour learnt by the day shift whose training has obviously rubbed off on them" (Henderson).

The incorporation of the emergent "constructive text" into day-to-day work routines was reinforced by published stories of successful training in the local house journal. Edited by Graham, these journal articles were designed to signal the permanency of change and provide a vehicle in further dissemination of an HRM text that placed primacy on;

[53]The use of the word team in this context refers to a particular shift group rather than the formal definition of team as that of a production cell.

> "The significance of teamwork in achieving our ever more stringent customer satisfaction goals" (Tie-Line, September 1994: 10).

It was within this context that Graham talked of experiencing easier access "to the ear of the operations director", and therefore more influence over the re-articulation of HRM discourse at a strategic as well as managerial level of conversation. These sentiments were mirrored by the following comments made by production managers themselves;

> "Henderson and Graham have helped convince us of the significance of releasing operator potential (...) CFM is a major company initiative, but we have only just scratched the surface of teamworking. I am enthusiastic about the support I am getting from our trainers in the development of cells, and this is helping us move forward with a clearer view of teamworking" (operations director).

> "We realise that now that we have got people involved (pause) it is important that you get the best out of those people and you have got to invest in training and understanding and building up of experience, for it to be a success"(operations manager).

The growing influence of the personnel function and ascendancy of the "constructive text" within strategic conversations was reflected in explicit attention being drawn to empowerment and development issues within a newly devised operations plan, shown below. It was also reflected in authority granted to Graham and Dawson by the CFM group, to implement strategies for team leader training, and to develop a plan for further training of all cell operators.

> **Company strategic plan** (...) "to increase responsiveness to customer requirements".
>
> **Operations strategic plan** From 1995 - 2000:
> - reduce manufacturing lead times
> - eliminate all non-value added activities
> - reduce inventory
> - react efficiently to fluctuating demand patters and market requirements
> - achieve operator accountability and introduce operator empowerment by providing education and training

Training workshops for team leaders provided a forum for the discussion of design as well as operational issues, and gave primacy to the constructive text type. This included dialogue about the intended end point of change and the involvement and support

required of senior management "in order to make things happen" (manager of development).

All cell team leaders (total of seven) attended a two-day development workshop where they examined the concept of empowerment and took part in a mix of classroom sessions and outdoor teambuilding activities. Training sessions were designed to facilitate a high level of participant involvement that culminated in group presentations made at the end of the course to a panel of senior managers on "Is Suture Finishing truly Customer Focused?". Discussion with team leaders revealed perceptions that this process was "critical" to the development of shared definitions and the development of action plans aimed at consolidating change. The latter was characteristic of conversations for performance that focused on generating action and intended results (Ford and Ford, 1995).

> "Our presentation was based on two pictures drawn on a flip chart. The first showed a space ship, which was orbiting between what was earth (this was the main body of the workforce), and the moon (which was our senior management). There was a strong communication link between the spaceship and the earth, but a very weak link shown between the space ship and the moon. That signalled the problems we had on the communication side and brought out a lot of issues for discussion. There wasn't enough guidance being given to team leaders.
>
> The other picture was one of a large cruiser. There was a lot of industry going on within the ship, but the ship did not have much direction. We showed the ship sailing off into the sunset and swerving about all over the place. There was no captain in the ship. This got the message across - where are we going, where exactly are we going with CFM? There was no leadership ... we needed vision, we needed direction, and we needed clarity of goals.
>
> We understood the basic things like reducing WIP (work in progress) and lead times, but there were a lot of conflicting messages about what we were going to do with CFM, how were we going to develop our people, how were we going to develop the team leader role".

This narrative is consistent with Ford et al.'s thesis that when a conversation for understanding is successful it will shift to conversation for performance. In this instance, conversation moved from focusing on understanding the rationale for change and options for action, towards the identification of action plans that would move the change forward;

> "A lot of discussion came out of this, and this was critical, absolutely essential (pause) It was the beginning of a sea change in attitudes amongst managers and team leaders. By the end of the weekend, we came to an agreement about where our priorities lay. This meant keeping a focus on the need to produce the necessary output, but also planning a way forward for greater flexibility and employee involvement in cells".

An outcome of these new understandings was an agreement between team leaders and the operations director to improve communication links between the senior team and the shopfloor by two means. The first included specialist CFM briefings to ensure regular communication about the progress of CFM.[54] The second outcome was the creation of the position of Cell Group Leader, whose job was to facilitate cross communication between team leaders, and provide a clear link between them and the senior team.

These structural changes, perceived to be critical to the maintenance of effective communications across different levels of management, were underpinned by an implicit understanding of the temporal nature of conversations and shared meanings. Common "realities" can only ever be held together by constantly negotiated and re-negotiated agreements and understandings (Watson, 1994). In this sense the cell group leader saw his position as one in which he was expected;

> "To champion the cause of team leaders and operators (...) we also need a champion of CFM who can communicate a clear vision and make sure that things will happen".

The cell group leader thus expected to play a pivotal role in the linking of strategic, managerial and operational conversations about CFM, allowing for both team leader and operator involvement in negotiating the "rules of the game", and the development of an integrated perspective on CFM.

In practice, focus group interviews with leading hands[55] revealed significant variations in the extent to which the team leaders were prepared to share power with their subordinates and engage in the new language of HRM. In the experience of workers

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[54] CFM issues tended to be "tacked onto" more general briefing sessions, providing limited opportunities for discussion and debate between workers and their managers.

[55] Interviews were held with leading hands from Prolene and Catgut cells who had recently completed the pilot training programme.

within Prolene and Catgut cells, this variation was not associated with economic exigencies/production requirements as might have been expected. Rather, supervisory resistance to employee involvement appeared to be rooted in an entrenched allegiance to "Theory X" beliefs in which it is assumed that workers need to be controlled closely and told exactly what do. (McGregor, 1960).

For example one leading hand within the Catgut cell complained that his team leader remained attached to the old management style that emphasised "costs, control and output". He explained that while management described this cell as the "trail blazer" for future manufacturing operations, few supervisory tasks had been devolved to his shift group, despite low production targets during the previous six months (early 1994). Catgut products were becoming less popular in light of the BSE crisis, and were being replaced by synthetic sutures such as Prolene and it was within the Prolene cells that production demands were more intense.

Yet despite the requirement to meet "tight production targets" for Prolene products, one leading hand observed that team leaders were responding to "pressure for more autonomy" from cell operators allowing them to "become involved and taking more and more responsibility for taking things on board". The following narrative indicates ways in which these team leaders were prepared to accept changes to relations of power and social practice on the shopfloor;

> "Conventionally if they needed components they told the supervisor and the supervisor told the service girl, who got the requisitions together. Now they do all that themselves. In Prolene they have three machines on the one batch and three girls working together on that batch. If they feel that they are going to need more material, one will go and write the requisition and go and get the stuff - put it in the computer- and that is them away again. So if they need things like that they do it all themselves now".

4.4.3 Micro and Macro contexts and moves towards "closure"

The two rival texts that framed competing management styles noted above reflected two different orientations towards action, and evidence has shown that the domination of one over the other depended upon changing structures internal and external firm. Consistent with phases one and two of change, at the heart of this dynamic were

tensions between "soft" and "hard" decisions made by the parent company that were linked to wider macro-structures and which both enabled and hindered conversations for "closure" (Ford and Ford., 1995) at Ethicon.

Corporate influence and the language of excellence

Push and pull forces associated with the language of excellence noted earlier created a number of tensions associated with attempts to consolidate change. In one sense excellence meant the development of HRM strategies and practices that allowed for employee development and growth as reflected in the J&J credo statement, and publicised examples of best practice in HRM such as that found in J&J's suture manufacturing plant in France. Here teamworking arrangements were fairly advanced. GAP"s (Group Autonome Polyvalente) were self managing groups which did not operate until operators had been trained in all skills within the team, and managers received fifty days training geared towards managing operators in a group environment. (Manager of Development)

In another sense "excellence" centred on the development of new manufacturing techniques, systems and procedures that could improve the efficiency and the ability for people to "contribute to their maximum potential" (1989 Annual report). The development of benchmarking practices within J&J was an example of activities geared towards achieving these objectives, and also provided a means of legitimising employee development strategies put forward by Graham as noted earlier. By drawing attention to ways in which team development could "add value" to the business she helped to create perceptions that the creation of empowered work culture was of "strategic" concern. She explained that as competition within the health industry increased, J&J continued to place pressures on its businesses to be cost effective and that under these circumstances, the long-term sustainability of teamworking would depend upon tangible evidence that self managing teams could improve the "bottom line". This influence led to an increasing concern amongst members of the CFM implementation team to develop more functional and control centred HR policies that could be used to determine what the CFM manager described as "more tangible goal related objectives ". Meeting such goals would help legitimate resources being channelled into the development of cells.

In an attempt to develop key performance indicators for cells, change agents simultaneously drew upon and combined a new and complex mix of "constructive" and "functional" text types. Respondents' accounts revealed how tensions between the two text types became manifest in conversations about training and development of cell workers;

> "One of the biggest issues we are facing on achieving complete eighty per cent transfer to CFM, is related to training and development. This involves such a big commitment and has created the most conflict. Two issues are important. One is the loss of production, and loss of variances. And secondly, the outcomes of training. "We are going to take people away for the whole day, how will this affect the bottom line? What is the end result of all this?". There remains a lot of uncertainty about what exactly we are going to achieve. Development is softer than some of the harder targets, such as moving the machines around. In a way it is an act of faith, and we have learnt a lot from that. We are trying to be more objective about the outcomes.
>
> (...) You can't simply have an act of faith - because you are running a business. The act of faith has got to be *visibly* taking you somewhere".
> (CFM manager)

Emphasis upon a need to legitimise "constructive" discursive practices (i.e. team building workshops) was consistent with earlier comments made by Dawson during phase two of change. He explained that while there were measurable benefits associated with cellular technology (including reduced inventories work-in-progress), the success of employee involvement and teamworking were not so obvious because of limited absolute and/or relative standards against which they could be assessed. Whereas certain training standards for cells had been developed by 1994, it was not clear what immediate and long-term financial benefits of team building and improved teamworking would provide.

Similarly personnel managers had difficulty articulating ways in which HR policies aimed at generating a committed, flexible workforce could be linked to overall business performance. Clear "bottom line results" remained difficult to establish within a preferred language of empowerment that centred on HRM as an investment rather than cost. Nevertheless, human resource outcomes such as quality and a reduction in absence were identified by the CFM implementation as potentially important key performance

indicators for cells (CFM Implementation Team committee minutes, 21st February 1994).

Data revealed that while a reduction in absence was considered to be a key indicator of effective cell working, the monitoring of this was severely constrained by current management information systems. The computerised personnel information system (CPIS) could be used to interrogate individual employee records and provide trends in absence across job categories (attaching, winding and so forth) but could not provide a breakdown of absence figures on a cell by cell basis, nor make direct comparisons between traditional and team operations.

The potential of the CPIS to facilitate the assessment of performance standards was not realised in two other important ways. Firstly it failed to provide a comprehensive measurement of skills versatility and employee development. Training specialists complained that they were hampered in adopting a more strategic approach to training and development because of poorly developed management information systems. At present training plans, scheduling of programmes and course evaluation were all completed manually.

Secondly, the CPIS was not programmed to provide psychometric test results in ways that could allow a comprehensive assessment of new cell members' performance against competencies shown at selection. These problems were significant given the continuing dominance of a functional text and an accountancy system that required the careful justification of the costs incurred in the development of cells. The implication for change agents was a need to develop a creative mix of both functional-orientated and constructive-orientated discursive practices in order to legitimise management plans and activities to different stakeholder groups. Data revealed however that the development of a relatively stable new mix of HRM texts was difficult within an environment in which change agents commonly moved onto higher profile projects within the company (this issue is examined in the next section).

Short-termism

Pressure to improve the "bottom line" combined with the retention of standard cost accounting procedures put continued pressure upon operations managers to meet short-term financial targets and subordinate people management issues to short-term fluctuations in production requirements. It also put pressure upon more senior managers to switch key personnel from one project to another depending upon business requirements. This problem of short termism was reinforced by structures for promotion and long standing "impression management" activities (Marchington, 1995). Earlier research into a quality circles at Ethicon indicated that change initiatives within the firm were as much influenced by a desire to follow fashion or "to latch onto things" than by an objective assessment of organisational imperatives (Brennan, 1988: 197). Indeed the company secretary remarked that the need to be seen to be "ahead of the game" was regarded an important influence on choice of strategy within Ethicon, and that;

> "If you have got over eighty per cent of the market, you are the benchmark in the suture manufacturing industry. Everybody is looking at what you are doing"

A member of the organisation for twenty two years, he explained that he had observed a number of change efforts that appeared to be more about introducing best practice than strategic responses to a changing environment;

> "Something is flavour of the month, and it starts with a huge amount of enthusiasm and then it peters off and then gets reborn under a different name. But you don't actually do exactly what you did before, it is slightly different and people say, here we go again!"

In this context, it was common for change instigators to move from one project to another quite quickly, and the absence of a stable management core meant that it was difficult to sustain consensus amongst change agents and members of the senior team. For example respondents talked of a "lack of direction" and "poor leadership" after the initial CFM manager was transferred onto the European logistics project, leading to "a significant dip in the whole programme", until the appointment of a new project leader (Head of Resourcing).

Consistent with the pattern of the switching of key players within the company from one project another, at the close of fieldwork, Graham was promoted to a line position elsewhere within the company, and Dawson expected to be transferred onto other

project in the near future. Before doing so he submitted a progress report to the CFM steering group that was characterised by assertions, expressives and declarations to bring about a sense of closure to the CFM process. Consistent with Ford and Ford's work, disengagement from the CFM programme was marked by "summaries, justifications for termination, expressions of positive sentiments, and discussions of continuity in which things are related to a larger context that is not ending" (Ford and Ford, 1995: 551). For example, progress made in relation to "human resource issues" was marked by claims about the achievement of;

> "An effective Partnership between personnel and operations, and a good understanding of human resource issues".
>
> "Genuine employee involvement in CFM decision-making i.e. reward team".
>
> "Three CFM cells have now received two days of teambuilding training and feedback is very positive; follow up actions underway".

Processes of consolidating CFM were reduced to a series of action points characterised by the acknowledgement of new possibilities that did not exist prior to the change initiative ensuring that agents are released from their change effort. This included the possibility of building on outdoor team leader training, the investigation of off-line activities that could take place in advance of cell moves such as quality/versatility training and which signalled Dawson's release from the CFM programme. These recommendations would presumably encourage new "initiative conversations" setting in motion a fresh set of meanings and shifts in the dynamic of organisational discourse.

4.5 Conclusion

Drawing upon a constructionist view the Ethicon case illustrates how organisational change was rooted in multi-layered "conversations" at strategic, managerial and operational levels of decision-making. A key contribution of this analysis is the examination of the intertextual nature of HRM discourse and its role in these conversations of change. Attention has been drawn to the complex blend of texts and discursive practices comprising the emergent discourse. These texts are shown to be mutually dependent, contrasting with the presentation in the normative approach of

HRM as a duality between hard and soft. A summary of these findings is presented below, and is structured round three themes emerging from the case:

- the fluidity of HRM (HRM as process)
- the role of HRM in the structuring of meaning
- the relationship between context and processes by which meanings become shared and/or fragmented.

4.5.1 HRM as process

Case study evidence revealed that HRM discourse was not planted fully formed in the nature of single one-off strategic decisions or fixed language. Rather, HRM acted as both a process through which people constructed their reality and as a product of that reality. As a process HRM provided a discursive resource that took the form of a coalition of contradictory text types referred to as "functional" and "constructive", and which mirrored "hard" and "soft" elements of HRM (Storey, 1995; Guest, 1995). Accounts of change disclosed ways in which change agents and their subordinates drew upon these texts and made different senses of concepts such as teamworking and flexibility, and of processes of manipulating their meaning potential, undertaken either at a conscious or unselfconscious level.

While the dominant coalition managed to exert some degree of discursive control through the construction of alliances and incorporating subordinate groups, participants were not passive receptacles of the new organisational discourse, nor did senior managers display univocal readings of HRM. Rather, all organisational members were meaning-makers in their own right and on engaging in the language of HRM were in a position to alter it thus shaping management information and interpretive frames. This dualism was illustrated in conversations at managerial level about the nature of an appropriate reward system for cells, and which provided a critical medium through which personnel and their line colleagues examined assumptions and implications that had under laid initial thinking about the discourse and practice of CFM.

At operational level, participants' accounts of the training process provided a rich insight into ways in which they actively engaged in the language of empowerment and teamworking and that in doing so became actively involved in its production and

reproduction. Training workshops established during phase three of change led to rounds of "negotiated social construction" similar to evidence presented by Gioia et al. (1991), and were rooted in initiative conversations and conversations for understanding and performance (Ford and Ford, 1995). At operator level it allowed participants to engage in open-ended dialogue with their seniors about the development of resources required to support CFM and key performance indicators, through which a common language and "workable interpretation" of the "ideal cell" emerged. Training of team leaders similarly centred on conversations for understanding and performance of resourcing and operational issues, but also allowed their inclusion in strategic conversations with senior managers that centred on the development of an organisational vision and strategic intent. This development of shared definitions resulted in the establishment of better communication links between different levels of decision-making, including more regular CFM briefings, and the creation of the position of Cell Group Leader. The latter promised to provide a pivotal role in the integration of strategic, managerial and operational conversations of change.

4.5.2 The role of HRM in the structuring of meaning

The preceding discussion indicated that the language of HRM was an important influence on organisation participants' perceptions of the nature, scope and processes of change. Data also displayed the importance of leaders' positions in framing the thoughts and actions of their subordinates. Consistent with Collin's arguments (1999), it appeared relatively easy during the initial phase of change, for change agents to create a positive view of CFM amongst "volunteers" joining the new pilot cell. This was based upon a rhetoric of empowerment and employee involvement that downplayed the less palatable aspects of teamworking (potential loss of earnings, loss of status and removal of differentials between skilled and semi-skilled operators) and differences in orientations between managers themselves and between managers and their subordinates.

The set overlap between the parties involved soon became strained as pilot cell operators questioned line management's version of teamworking in which job rotation

within the cell was severely limited and operator autonomy restricted to individual responsibility for quality inspection. The perceived gap between the "reality" expressed in management statements about CFM and the "reality" of operators' experience of CFM, represented differences in orientations and interests between line and personnel managers noted above, and the significant impact of existing attitudes and work routines embedded in traditional cost accounting procedures.

Disillusionment amongst pilot cell operators was expressed in an increase in absenteeism and the restriction of productivity amongst "high performers " who perceived the payment system to be unfair insofar as the more skilled and more productive workers were paid the same as less skilled and less productive workers. It was within this context that senior personnel and line managers made a concerted effort to portray a united view of CFM.

Analysis of this dynamic exposed the operation of power relations embedded in organisational discourse, showing how dominant coalitions had more resources at their disposal to control the context of text production and/or present a text as legitimate or illegitimate. Such processes of discursive closure were closely bound to the employment of external consultants, and became central to the development of a univocal managerialist "world view" in which contested definitions of CFM emerging amongst pilot operators were subverted.

Consultants worked closely with the senior team in the development of CFM awareness sessions, and later, in the creation of trial selection procedures. Their language use mirrored much of the prescriptive literature on "best practice" in HRM found in popular management texts and was an important influence upon the broadening of the vocabulary of change to include concepts of "continuos improvement" and "empowerment". This was represented in briefing sessions about the intended nature and importance of CFM, the re-labelling of job titles, and new job descriptions for cell members.

Data indicated that these discursive practices helped to re-create an integrated and positive image of CFM between managers and subordinates. The result was ready acceptance amongst operators to transfer to newly created cells and thus engage in a "trial psychological contract" (Grant, 1999). Six new product cells were established at this time and comprised thirty two per cent of the labour force within the suture assembly plant.

4.5.3 Relationship between context and processes by which meanings become shared and/or fragmented

Textual analysis of those processes by which organisation members constructed and reconstructed their world revealed a dynamic process of negotiation and powerful internal tensions not only between management and labour, but amongst change agents themselves. Differences between levels and functions of management were shown to underwrite much of this political activity, especially differences in understanding between personnel and line managers. This showed a constant movement of meaning about the importance of employee involvement and development issues to the success of CFM. The operations director and his supporters favoured an approach to change that focused on "hard" structural changes in which it was implicitly assumed that new concepts such as quality, flexibility and teamwork could be defined and measured in an objective and relatively unambiguous fashion. As a result, the "soft" issues of employee attitudes and development extolled by personnel managers were perceived to be of secondary importance and human resource considerations were subsequently taken downstream to financial and production issues.

Tensions between the "functional " and "constructive" approaches to change presented themselves in contested approaches to reward and what was perceived to be an acceptable amount of "time out" allowed for operators to be developed as team members.

Data revealed the historical dominance of engineering/financial decisions in the organisation that placed personnel managers in a highly reactive position. This was reflected in their initial exclusion from the design stage of change and eventual involvement only when unexpected employee relations issues arose over the pay of

workers in the pilot cell. As these problems began to threaten the survival of CFM, the Personnel Director and later, his Manager of Management Development became key authors in the re-articulation of HRM, enabled and constrained by the language of "excellence" and "enterprise" emerging at corporate and wider societal levels. These external discourses were inscribed into a variety of discursive practices upon which personnel specialists could draw in order to raise the importance of "soft" change mechanisms aimed at cultural integration.

Examples included taking advantage of government funding into the development of more sophisticated selection techniques for cell workers and making application for Investors in People status in accordance with government policy introduced in 1993. Data revealed that that these initiatives at local level provided a legitimacy to the development of people centred change strategies and a constructive text that were important within an engineering culture in which personnel issues were typically "downstream" to business strategy and financial considerations.

Acceptance of the constructive text amongst organisational participants was however, continuously threatened by traditional managerial assumptions and values embedded in a range of customs and procedures in which elements of the old control discourse remained institutionalised. This included pressures placed upon operations managers to meet short-term financial targets, and structures for promotion that encouraged change champions to move from one project to another quite quickly making it difficult to sustain consensus amongst the top team. These problems were exacerbated by the effects of corporate restructuring and unpredictable production demands placed on Ethicon as it became the centre for production of Prolene material. The resultant influx of Prolene material into cells, coupled by a growing disillusionment amongst cell operators of the new management regime, discouraged operators in traditional areas to apply for vacant cell positions. At the same time the senior team perceived that increasing competitive pressures placed primacy on plans to consolidate the CFM initiative. This paradox highlighted the enabling and constraining features of the marketplace. While high production pressures placed constraints on the extent to which cells could be developed, the metaphor and associated language of the "market"

provided a discursive resource used by change leaders to create a commonality of interests between employees and their managers about the growth and survival of the firm.

4.5.4 Summary

The Ethicon case has provided a rich description of the role of HRM in organisational change, demonstrating that it acted as a critical vehicle in the creation of common understandings and interests amongst organisation participants.

The case also revealed the difficulties inherent in the notion of managing meanings. While dominant managers were able to achieve some degree of discursive closure, this became increasingly difficult to sustain as operators experienced the limited version of teamworking preferred by many line managers who remained wedded to traditional accounting procedures. These procedures acted as a totem of the old culture and a powerful influence upon the continuing dominance of a functional text that served to re-produce elements of the engineering discourse concerned with control of variances and maintaining the "bottom line".

A key contribution of this case has been to show the constitutive nature of HRM and critically evaluate the constant movement of meaning as managers attempted to effect strategic change. Importantly the case reveals ways in which organisation members were oriented to and by competing texts and discursive practices that were shown to inextricably linked to one another. These findings support earlier arguments about the mutuality of "hard" and "soft" HRM practices (Keenoy 1999) and are consistent with the view of organisations as " fluid entities situated within the broader cultural economy of intertextual activity" (Taylor 1999: 65). Fundamental to an understanding of this "fluidity" is an analysis of the relationship between processes of enablement and constraint within the field of power relations against which organisational members make meanings.

5 Chapter Five: BP Chemicals (Grangemouth) Case Study

5.1 Antecedents of change

An examination of the antecedents of change at BPGR was consistent with wider trends within the oil and chemicals industry in which recession and alterations in world markets (during the 1980s and 1990s) acted as catalysts for strategic change and shift in "sector recipe" (Marchington, 1992; Ritson, 1999). This was signified by the decentralisation of strategies and structures within leading oil companies, and the emergence of an individualist HRM agenda which replaced the traditional collectivist approach to people management within the industry (Cibin and Grant, 1996; Marchington, 1992; Ritson 1999; Tuckman 1998; Higgs, 1992). The picture to emerge was the creation of firms with "loose-tight" properties as defined by Peters and Waterman (1982: 318), which allowed plant managers considerable autonomy in running their organisations, but which attempted to achieve central control through managing corporate culture.

Changes in "world view" of employee relations at sector level was reflected in the launching of BP' s project 2000 noted earlier. Historically there had been a wide degree of choice within BP's business units about people management issues, which in recent years had allowed businesses considerable freedom to manage their own affairs. Since Project 2000 this freedom became increasingly restricted as the parent company sought to create a dominant management style and corporate culture across all its business units. It was envisaged by the chairman of the time that transformational change, triggered by significant financial losses within the chemicals division[56], could be engineered through deployment of "hard" and "soft" change mechanisms. The former included changes in corporate structure and operating mechanisms and included replacement of central office departments by small flexible teams, delayering of management structures at all levels within the corporation, and decentralisation of investment authority through BP's business divisions.

[56] The division lost twenty four million pounds in 1992 and sixty eight million in 1993 (Annual Reports, 1992, 1993). These problems were exacerbated by capacity planned or installed by Asian manufacturers that was equal to more than half of Europe's total production (Abrahams 1992, 1993).

Structural change also encompassed alterations to systems of monitoring and reward at the level of the individual, group, and organisation. "Benchmarking" and "Value Improvement" (VIP) programmes were initiated, allowing for systematic comparison of management and labour practices within and outside the chemicals industry[57]. They were carried out independently by management at site level and drew upon the concepts of "continuous improvement" and "culture change" emerging at corporate level. The rationale for these initiatives was framed by a vision articulated by the chief executive officer of BP Chemicals division: "Becoming a world leader in our chosen sectors" (BP Chemicals World, Feb 1992: 4)

Benchmarking activities acted as catalysts in the development of HRM practices within the division, leading to the delayering of existing hierarchies, the establishment of manufacturing teams and changes in union recognition procedures (IRS Employment trends, 1997a ; Tuckman, 1998). Trade union demarcation was seen by managers at business unit level as a key constraint to the development of individual flexibility, leading to the enactment of strategies for de-recognition which took effect at the Baglan plant in 1992, (Smith, 1992) and at Hull in 1994 (Tuckman, 1998)[1]. De-recognition at the Grangemouth site took place later in 1995, and this issue is examined as part of the case analysis in the next section.

The development of a company-wide performance management system was a further example of a "hard" culture change mechanism, viewed as critical to the process of cultural renewal (Donegan, 1990; Lorenz, 1990). Executives sought to develop a set of performance measures that would allow for easier monitoring and control of performance across BP's businesses. Managers at each manufacturing location were given the autonomy to develop their own performance management systems that would fit local circumstances, but would be required to track their contribution to meeting the company performance targets set annually. These structural changes were reinforced by "softer" change mechanisms that were characteristic of an "indoctrinative" approach

[57] Benchmarking focused on "looking at detail at the competition in order to set the standards against which BP chemicals can and has to operate". VIP "involves every part of the organisation in examining the cost and performance base" (Brian Sanderson, Chief executive officer, BP Chemicals World 1992: 4).

(Bate, 1994) that emphasised the importance of creating a "learning organisation", described by the Group Training and Development Manager as;

> "An organisational culture which empowers people and enables them to develop and learn" (Donegan, 1990: 304).

This statement signified a new discourse of HRM emerging at corporate level which mirrored the emergence of the "enterprise culture" promoted by the Thatcher administration and which talked of the need for both the development of the "commercial enterprise" and "enterprising individuals" (Fairclough, 1992; du Gay and Salaman, 1992, 1998). The enterprise discourse centred round images of "leaner" more competitive organisations that allowed people to take risks and accept responsibility for their own actions (Legge, 1995b). Trade unions and collective agreements were seen to impede the free working of the market and discourage the development of individual responsibility. These individualistic and unitary values that pervaded the enterprise discourse were central to the new managerial lexicon emerging within BP, and were communicated through the media, establishment of "networking" at all levels within the company, and company literature circulated to all employees[58].

Rich in symbolism, the language of HRM offered a series of metaphors that framed the formulation of mission statements and provided a measure of logic to changes in strategy, structure and management systems. For example, the metaphor of single-status was represented in a television campaign with the slogan "all together better", symbolised the breaking down of hierarchical barriers and development of a unitary management style within the company (Tuckman, 1998: 132). Similarly metaphors of the market, customer and team provided means to downplay differences of interests between capital and labour and to re-define organisational reality around a unitary view of the firm (Fox, 1966);

> "Teamwork underpins formula for success"
> (BP Chemicals World, June Feb 1992: 4).

> "Tough decisions are needed now to reach No 1 in target markets"
> (BP Chemicals World, June 1992: 4; Feb 1992: 4).

[58] This included corporate-wide Journal titled BP World and journals produced at the level of each business division.

> "A return to profitability, and with it, BP's traditionally high reputation, will be achieved through successful teamwork" (Company Chairman, Annual Report, 1992).

Section two will examine the processes by which the discourse of HRM that was emerging at corporate level, was re-constructed at BPGR, leading to a new "order of discourse" (Fairclough 1992) within the plant. Historically discursive formations within BPGR were dominated by a discourse that centred on traditional forms of management control and spoke of "jobs", "skills", "costs", "us and them " for example. This is similar to what Walton (1985) and Watson (1994) refer to as a "control" discourse. As explained in section 3.1, it was embedded in a bureaucratic and hierarchical organisational structure and set of personnel systems which sought to impose external sources of control on work as a means to ensure discipline and output. The language and practice associated with this particular text type is somewhat similar to the "engineering discourse" that characterised the old ways of working within the Ethicon case in that an emphasis on cost minimisation and "hard contracting" fostered an instrumental approach to work amongst production staff. In addition there was limited internal mobility or promotion amongst industrial staff into "staff" grading structures.

Unlike Ethicon, unions had been recognised at the plant for over forty years and careful attention was paid to "policing" rules and procedures jointly agreed between managers and unions through single channel bargaining arrangements. As noted earlier, managers in recent years had placed emphasis on developing constructive relationships with trade unions manifested in the latest agreement that sought to create an "atmosphere of common purpose". This built upon an alternative language and practice of personnel management within the plant that was framed by a lexicon broadly similar to the "welfare" discourse outlined in the Ethicon case. Personnel managers talked of a strong "welfare" tradition within the function that in the words of respondents was responsible for "ensuring fairness and consistency", and "organising public holidays, Christmas parties or visiting people when they are off sick". This caring ethos was reflected also in practices geared towards generating loyalty to the company such as the issuing of jumpers with the BP logo to staff involved in open days, and notions of a "job for life" reflected in average service amongst production workers of over ten years.

The two contrasting discourses will be given the same labels as those identified at Ethicon; "engineering" and "welfare", recognising that each is particular to the organisational setting in which it is enacted. The next section will trace the introduction of HRM discourse introduced under the rubric of "One Team" and ways in which this combined with prevailing discourses to create a new mix of "hard" and "soft" text types, used to frame strategies for change and prevent opposition to management plans.

5.2 Evolution of HRM at BPGR

This section provides an analysis of the first phase of change illustrated in figure 5.1 (page 152). It centres round an examination of the role of HRM discourse in processes of reality construction and their connection with the organisational context. Following the same framework as the Ethicon case, these dynamics are depicted in the form of a hierarchy of "conversations" (at strategic, managerial and operational levels of managerial activity) within which change occurred and HRM was enacted.

5.2.1 The site vision

The first phase of change at BPGR was initiated by a new works general manager (WGM) appointed in 1993 and who was well known in the company for leading transformation change at BP's chemicals plant in Baglan Bay. This included downsizing, the establishment of multi-skilled manufacturing teams and union de-recognition[59]. The WGM (Brown) explained that he developed a vision for the site soon after his appointment, which was based on his prior experience within BP, present and anticipated environmental conditions in which BPGR operated, and influenced by his role as BP Chemicals "manufacturing champion". This position meant he was " the sponsor of manufacturing excellence within the industry". The term constituted a particular way of talking and writing about management practice within the company which related to both "hard" and "soft" aspects of HRM (section 4.1 and 4.7).

On describing his vision for the site, Brown made use of a "hard" language of HRM associated with management control and improving the "bottom line" that built upon the

prevailing engineering discourse within the plant. It meant that plans for change were to be legitimised and expressed as far as possible in rational or analytical terms. Statements about the intended nature of change were also framed by a "soft" version of HRM that emphasised employee development and empowerment and were more consistent with the prevailing welfare discourse. This contradiction is found within much of the rhetoric of HRM (Legge, 1995a,b; Storey, 1992) and manifested in Brown's vision for BPGR which was later given the label "One Team";

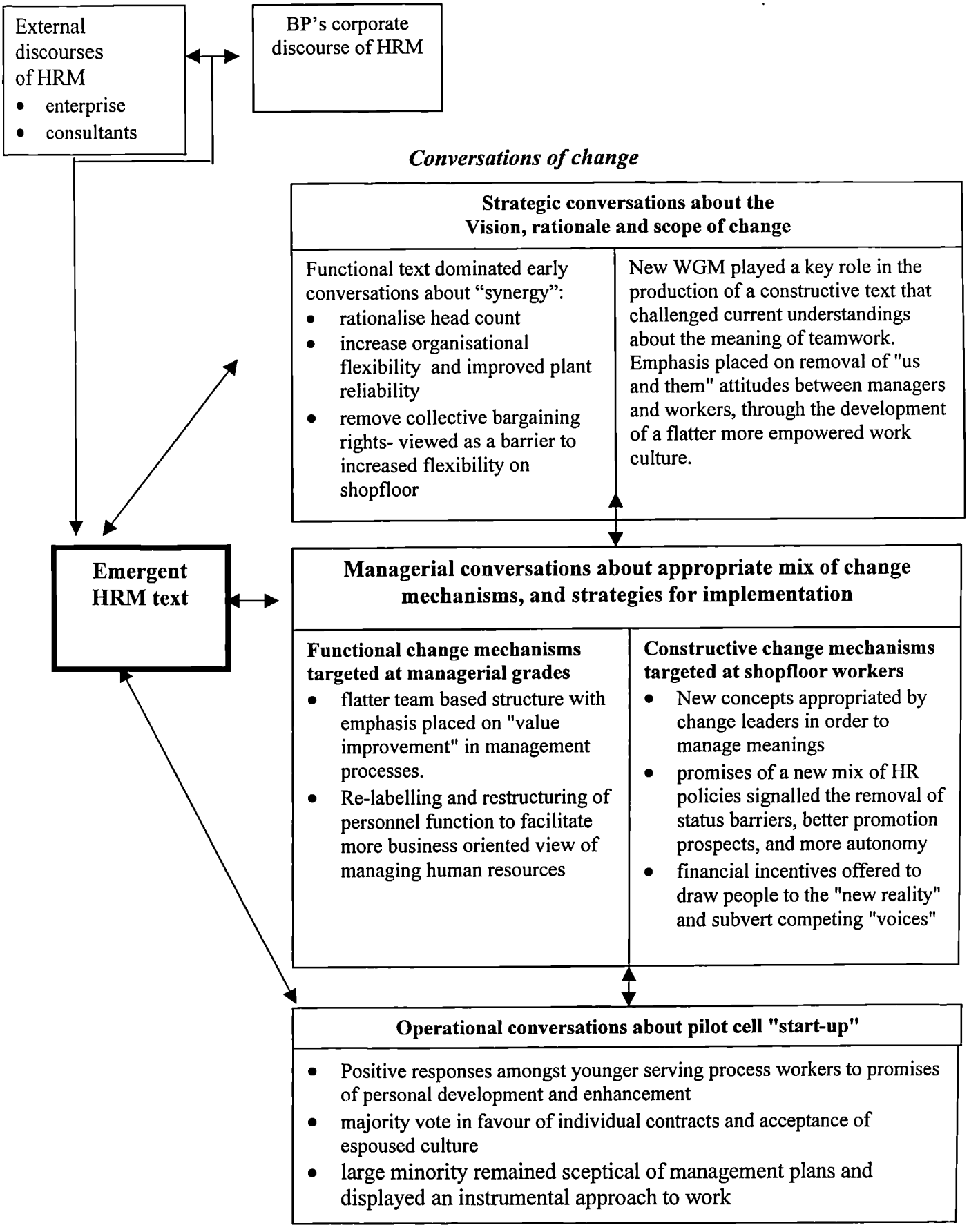
> "The strategy I have developed here is very much a visionary one which is about creating a situation where individuals are empowered (through the development of self-directed teams) to grow to their full potential, uninhibited by any restrictions (...) The real driving force for this is performance improvement, in particular plant reliability".

The "hard" and "soft" text types manifested in the above statement shall be referred to as "functional" and "constructive" and were broadly similar to the language framing strategies for change at Ethicon. The former focused on the development of new working practices and personnel policies geared towards improving employee and organisational efficiency, and the latter focused on developing opportunities for employee development and empowerment. The "constructive" text invoked a fresh set of interpretations of teamworking than that traditionally defined in the plant and which focused on flexible working practices rather than notions of involvement or empowerment.

[4]Baglan Bay was later closed as part of the BP Group's policy to reduce European ethylene capacity in 1994 (BP Chemicals World, April /May 1995: 5)

Figure 5.1

Phase one of change: evolution of HRM



Brown envisaged that teamworking for industrial staff would move beyond multi-skilling in process skills, to a form of work organisation in which team members would become competent in various management and leadership functions, and develop more sophisticated knowledge and understanding of plant processes.

Moreover it was visualised that manufacturing engineers (middle managers) would become more important to the management of human resources and would be expected to move away from the role of technical expert to "coach". This meant the development of a participative management style and allocation of responsibility amongst manufacturing engineers to appraise, train, develop and motivate production and maintenance teams. It would also place the first line manager position (page 164) in jeopardy as supervisory responsibilities became fragmented and transferred to the shopfloor and to middle managers (see table 5.1 on the following page).

Once articulated, Brown's vision would become open to multiple readings, and a key characteristic of the initial phase of change was his attempt to close off competing meanings and generate support for a particular "world view" of the organisation;

> "I am absolutely clear. The first thing you do is to be clear in your mind where you want to be (...). You don't go in and say (to the senior team) what do you want to do? You are always trying to ensure that you consult and involve people, but are heading towards some sort of visionary goal. You don't go in and ask people what do you think that vision should be, you've got to be clear in your own mind and then you've got to share it with the team and get them participating before the implementation and involve them in that".

Prior to formal articulation of his vision amongst members of the top team, Brown recognised the need to shape cognitions currently framed by discourses that centred on traditional forms of management control and conflict resolution. In this context he saw himself as a culture creator, consistent with the notion of "transformational leadership" that lays great stress on the development of a compelling vision, able to secure the commitment of managers across different levels decision making and beyond, to the shopfloor (Bryman, 1999).

Table 5.1 Current Organisation of production/maintenance work

Since restructuring of industrial grades in 1992, production teams were self covering and required to perform plant specific as well as laboratory tests, including routine ("first line") mechanical, electrical and instrument tasks (achieved by individuals rotating through all skills shown below). Each team had a designated team leader (who tended to be an "expert" on either the "cold" or "hot" side) [60], and was managed by a first line manager. This "staff" position was similar to the traditional foreman's role described by Storey (1992) and included taking responsibility for planning and co-ordination, discipline, health and safety, training and assessment of operators and maintenance staff.

Process	*Structure and no. employed*	**Skill levels / key tasks**
Production process Crackers comprised two processes referred to as the "hot" side and the "cold" side. Operators allocated to each side of the process were effectively sub teams. Whereas there was a fairly high degree of job flexibility within each sub team, there was little or no movement of workers between process areas.	There was a total of 550 shift production staff. Each manufacturing plant typically comprised 5 shift operating teams each with : 1 first line manager 1 team leader 10 operators	Operator tasks were distinguished according to three levels; base/entry levels, skill level 1 and skill level 2. Operators competent in all outside operating work stations and the required craft and laboratory skills progressed to skill level 1. Those who were competent to perform work station control responsibilities progressed to level 2.
Maintenance & Manufacturing support Included small shift based teams, and day maintenance teams. They comprised a mix of mechanical and instrument /Electrical skills, as well as identified specialist skills.	There was a total of 200 maintenance and support staff. Each manufacturing area was supported by shift and day-based teams comprising 4 members with a mix of instrument/ electrical skills, as well as identified specialist skills.	Team leaders were required to perform normal operating tasks within the team's area, and were responsible for administration, planning and prioritising workloads.
Support services : These teams provided the required Material Handling, Stores and other peripheral support to the Production and Maintenance Support Teams.	Stores were day based while others were shift based. This included the provision of emergency cover and responsibility for fire and security across the factory.	

[60] Team leaders were classed as "skill two" workers and given an additional payment for team leader duties. Historically, they were promoted on the basis of seniority and technical skill. Most "leadership" responsibilities laid with the first line manager.

Much prescriptive literature describes visionary leadership and processes of achieving cultural unity as being relatively unproblematic, and downplays differences in interests between managers from different disciplines and levels of decision-making, as well as those differences that exists between managers and their subordinates (Collins, 1999). In the case of BPGR it meant destroying social structures in which managerial demarcations, and "them and us " attitudes and behaviours were embedded, and creating an alternate reality that could be understood and shared amongst all organisational participants. Brown chose to implement a mix of "hard" and "soft" change mechanisms to achieve this.

It was noted in chapter two that there is disagreement amongst practitioners and academics about the primacy of "hard" or "soft" change mechanisms required to achieve transformational change. Those who emphasise the former argue that the articulation of a clear (and shared) vision coupled with appropriate changes in structure and systems will "force" behavioural change, which in turn will lead to more fundamental changes in attitudes and values through time (Schein, 1985; Beer et al., 1990, 1993). Others have argued that simply altering cultural artefacts (structures) will not alter the culture in the long term. These surface changes are equated with behavioural compliance rather than behavioural commitment. As a result they do not affect or change deeper levels of awareness and will eventually be discarded as the prevailing cultural values and assumptions reassert themselves (Gagliardi, 1986; Ogbonna and Harris, 1998; Ogbonna, 1992). From this point of view "soft" change mechanisms are regarded as a critical to strategic change, and typically target individual and group perceptions and beliefs through a heavy investment in education and training (for example Goodstein and Burke, 1997; Price and Murphy, 1983).

At BPGR, Brown considered that changes in the "mind set" of the top team and more junior managers could largely be achieved through structural changes in authority relationships and working arrangements. Management layers were subsequently reduced from eight to five as shown in table 5.3, page 164, including the removal of the depute WGM and group superintendent positions. These changes were described by Brown to be " a vital precursor to culture change" in order to alter the power dynamics within the top team and below;

> "The value improvement process allowed me to make important changes in the size and structure of the senior team that could facilitate the development of an empowered work culture. My depute was a "power broker" on site; everything was channelled through him. On removing the second management layer, I had a team I could talk to about the way forward, and a team who felt that they were equals".

This statement indicated Brown's awareness that text production and interpretation were shaped by political relations embedded in organisational structures. Current reporting relationships clearly supported the strong hierarchical assumptions of the organisation and reflected a lack of willingness to delegate beyond what Brown referred to as "the gang of three" (WGM and his two deputes). The establishment of the new senior team provided a forum within which heads of departments were now "equal partners" in strategic conversations, allowing for the emergence of shared understandings and a draft vision statement that became a foundation for implementation strategies for change (shown in table 5.2).

Although the stated aim of One Team was "involvement", more junior managers, their subordinates and union representatives were not included in the initial policy decisions and design of the change initiative. Consistent with O'Connor's thesis about the "paradoxes of participation" (O'Connor 1995), involvement was closely prescribed by change instigators because it was being used to try to achieve business objectives, rather than as a form of altruism. It meant that the text of change was characterised by a constant play between inclusion and exclusion of different stakeholder groups depending upon ongoing changes in the organisational context (these are examined in the next section).

Table 5.2 One Team: The Site Vision (Draft)
(not publicised beyond members of the senior management team until later that year)

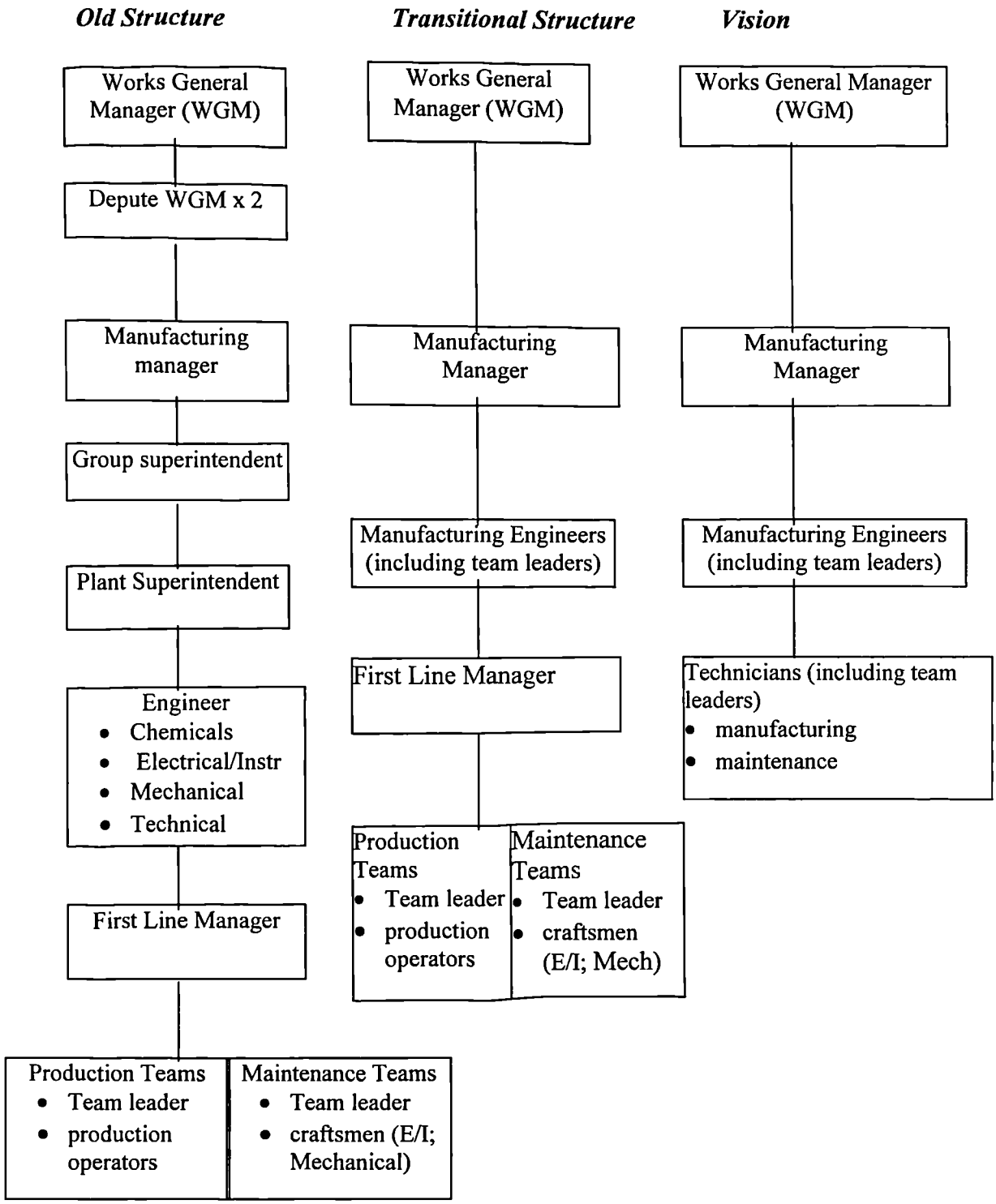
VISION STATEMENT
The Grangemouth Site will have earned and will sustain a reputation as a World Class Manufacturing Performer, meeting the needs of our Customers and Businesses, and having the trust and respect of our local community. This will be achieved through a process of continuous improvement.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE VISION
The next level of performance can be achieved by further enhancing the role of the individual in a framework where teamwork towards common goals is encouraged. The following key elements of the Vision are consistent with this approach.

- the development of the individual without constraint
- the creation of self-directed teams
- recognition of individual contribution
- creation of Technicians.

Focus for change at lower level management centred on structural change consistent with the approach taken by Beer et al. (1990, 1993). The approach was underpinned by an assumption that the re-construction of formal reporting relationships and organisational systems would "force" through behavioural and attitudinal changes amongst managers, thus allowing for the creation of a new "world view " amongst participants. This was to be accomplished under the auspices of the company-wide Value Improvement Programme noted earlier (page 153), which provided a means to rationalise the organisational hierarchy and introduce the concept of teamworking amongst the ranks of manager. It included the establishment of multi-skilled engineering teams formed from the re-grouping of engineering disciplines. Jobs and roles were redesigned in line with the organisational vision and job titles relabelled to emphasise movement to the new culture. All engineering positions were categorised under the generic title of "manufacturing engineer". Plant superintendents were expected to become an integral member of their new "engineering team" and were referred to as manufacturing engineering team leader (ME TL). For the purposes of this case, ME TL's shall be categorised as middle managers and manufacturing engineers, together with first line managers as operational managers.

Table 5.3 Past and anticipated changes in manufacturing organisational structure



Brown's aim was to move the organisation towards a flatter team-based structure shown above. This meant a reduction in four layers of management, including the removal of

the first line manager position, and establishment of self directed production teams of the kind Brown had established at Baglan Bay in 1992. These structural changes were supported by two-day training sessions designed to foster new skills and help engineering teams develop appropriate methods of co-operation and co-ordination.

Consistent with a task-aligned approach, the target of cultural change was at the level of roles and responsibilities, rather than at individual or team cognitions. Implicit in this view was that the reaching of consensus amongst different levels of managers about the meaning of "self management", and the prioritisation of goals and setting standards of performance was relatively unproblematic. In practice, as revealed in subsequent sections, informants' accounts indicated that this was not the case because of multiple "realities" existing amongst the different ranks of manager. Strategies geared towards changes at managerial level contrasted with those targeted at the shopfloor, and launched under the slogan "One Team". It was at this level that Brown and his new senior team made a more concerted effort to change individual/ team perceptions, beliefs and consciousness. Employee flexibility and autonomy was not believed to be achievable through immediate structural changes but first required a closer alignment of individual goals and values with senior management through the development of re-educative and communication strategies.

Data revealed that these were designed to obfuscate an employee relations strategy to remove trade union influence at the plant that was seen to encourage "us and them" attitudes and behaviours rooted in bargaining structures and processes. Brown regarded bargaining arrangements to be "a significant barrier to the development of individual potential" and also explained that they placed important constraints upon corporate plans to merge the three business streams at the Grangemouth site (page 170)[61].

At the same time industrial relations structures were a powerful "totem" (Berg, 1986) that symbolised a strong sense of collectivism at the plant in which nearly one hundred percent of its industrial staff were unionised. It was within this context that a team of senior managers devised strategies that sought to marginalise the role of trade unions

and create a new reality of the organisation that was built upon consensus rather than coalitions between different interest groups. In effect this meant the mobilisation of discursive resources to manage meaning and generate employee commitment to the new vision. Personnel managers became closely involved in these processes of "text" creation, facilitated by the restructuring of the department during the VIP exercise.

The head of department previously known as the personnel and industrial relations manager, became an HRM manager and a member of the senior management team. The function's three sections, resourcing, industrial relations and training, were reorganised into two teams, resourcing and development. Job titles were also changed to signal a move away from a union centred approach. The positions of personnel/industrial relations/training officer were relabelled personnel/training adviser, and the more senior personnel positions referred to as HR advisers. Each team became "self-managing" and was led by an HR adviser.[62]

The restructuring and the re-naming of the personnel department symbolised a significant shift in roles and responsibilities of the function that placed the HRM manager and his team of advisers in a more powerful position to manage culture change at the plant. As the WGM explained;

> "I believe that the most important thing we have got to do in HR is to change from the reactive style of the industrial relations era to a more proactive style of planning individuals' development. It is a total swing from the reactive defensive mode of the 70s and 80s to a much more proactive supportive style (...) if you asked about personnel in the past they were viewed as the people who eventually signed things off or whatever. They were the ultimate authority when it came to people and salaries.
>
> (...) Now they are no longer the custodians of the rules and procedures, they must be seen to be proactively developing strategies for individuals or for teams and be supportive of that".

[61] These plans were not made explicit to employees until the "One Team" initiative had been implemented, but was an important situational factor influencing change processes at BPGR.

[62] Overall, team leaders were responsible for six HR advisors, seventeen personnel/training advisors, and four youth trainees. The entire first/second groups were members of the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD). The others were either working towards IPD membership, or a Certificate in Personnel and Development from a local College.

HRM specialists were placed in what they referred to as a "management consultancy role", in which they were expected to become "drivers" of change and accept a more business-oriented view of people management. The following statement made by one team leader in the HRM department reflected a significant move away from concerns about welfare and collective agreements to ones more closely aligned to the "bottom line";

> "People are now being viewed as a source of competitive advantage. We are pretty comfortable now that the people working here are the people we want. Overall, the people we have got will add value to the business" (Team leader, Resourcing Section).

Allocated a "considerable budget" personnel staff soon became central to the development of a new management lexicon that called into question current attitudes and behaviours embedded in structures and processes of collective bargaining, the removal of which was described by the same HRM team leader as;

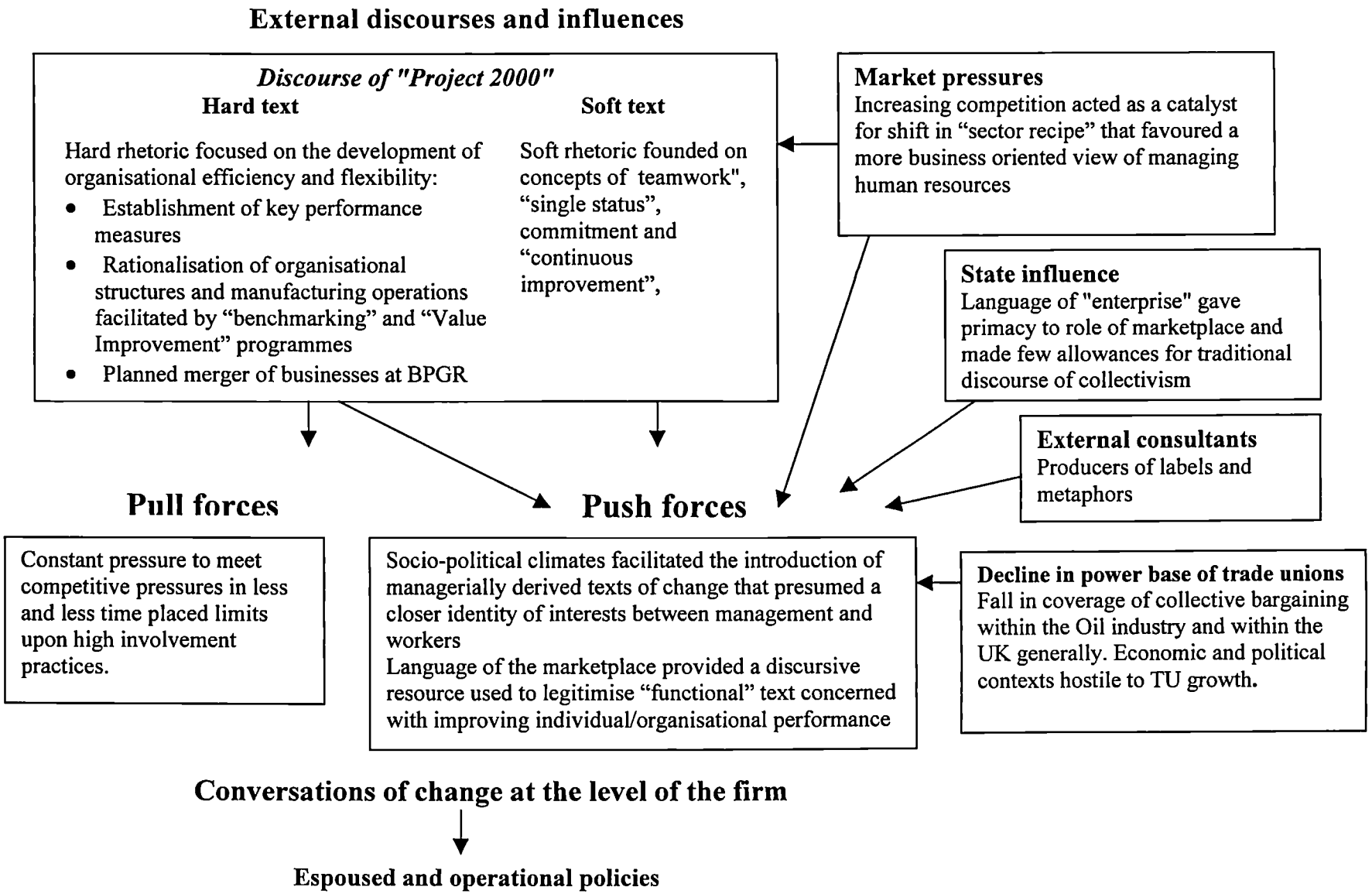
> "a critical step in breaking out of the old mould. This means completely ripping up the rules, getting rid of annual negotiations and collective bargaining, which is all part of the same package".

The destruction of this powerful artefact depended upon focusing people's attention on a new vision for change that created an image of harmony and mutual relations, thus preventing the danger of open confrontation developing between union members and management. Data presented in the next section reveals that the emergent discourse of HRM provided a critical medium through which the WGM and his supporters managed this dynamic.

5.2.2 Organisational context and the dynamic nature of HRM

The language of HRM provided a range of new concepts that offered an important medium in the creation of shared meanings and was inextricably linked to the internal and external organisational contexts. Those aspects that were perceived by senior managers as being significant included corporate decision making, local union influence, changes in the wider socio-political landscape and current employment practices, each of which were inter-linked (illustrated in figure 5.2 as push/pull forces).

Figure 5.2


External discourses and influences
Discourse of "Project 2000"
Hard text
Soft text
Hard rhetoric focused on the development of organisational efficiency and flexibility:
• Establishment of key performance measures
• Rationalisation of organisational structures and manufacturing operations facilitated by "benchmarking" and "Value Improvement" programmes
• Planned merger of businesses at BPGR
Soft rhetoric founded on concepts of teamwork", "single status", commitment and "continuous improvement",
Market pressures
Increasing competition acted as a catalyst for shift in "sector recipe" that favoured a more business oriented view of managing human resources
State influence
Language of "enterprise" gave primacy to role of marketplace and made few allowances for traditional discourse of collectivism
External consultants
Producers of labels and metaphors
Pull forces
Push forces
Constant pressure to meet competitive pressures in less and less time placed limits upon high involvement practices.
Socio-political climates facilitated the introduction of managerially derived texts of change that presumed a closer identity of interests between management and workers
Language of the marketplace provided a discursive resource used to legitimise "functional" text concerned with improving individual/organisational performance
Decline in power base of trade unions
Fall in coverage of collective bargaining within the Oil industry and within the UK generally. Economic and political contexts hostile to TU growth.
Conversations of change at the level of the firm
Espoused and operational policies

Sector and corporate discourse and strategic positioning of BPGR

It was noted earlier that Brown's vision was influenced by his understanding of changes emerging at sector and corporate levels and was made up of a combination of "hard" and "soft" versions of HRM. Programmes of corporate restructuring and alterations to systems of monitoring and reward represented the former. Of particular significance to BBGR was the corporate decision to merge the three business streams at Grangemouth by the year 2000 (Oil, Chemicals and Exploration). A special task force of senior managers drawn from each site was formed in July 1994 to develop a vision of a single "high performing" complex (Industrial Relations Report, 1994). This meant emulating "best practice companies" identified during benchmarking exercises carried out within BP during 1992. Studies indicated that "single-status" was an important prerequisite to the development of an HRM approach aimed at "the development of the individual and the creation of self-directed teams". It represented a new organisational culture in which manual and non-manual staff would be placed on the same terms and conditions, and would bring an end to established collective bargaining;

> "Single status is therefore viewed as an important part of the Vision as an environment geared towards the individual cannot be fully compatible with Trade Unions and collective bargaining" (IR Strategy for Continuous Improvement, 16 August 1994)

The move towards single-status had to be managed carefully given the strategic positioning of the Grangemouth complex. Brown explained that the complex was "certainly the most important site in the UK for BP and is totally strategic". This required the need to avoid the kind of industrial conflict that had characterised union de-recognition at Baglan Bay and Hull plants, which had rested on "intimidation" tactics (Tuckman 1998). Brown explained that the "directive and hostile"[63] manner in which change had been managed at the Baglan plant was not an appropriate change management style at BPGR;

> "So the view we took then was that yes it is important that we move forward with the complex, but we realise that we can't do a Baglan. We can only go up

[63] As part of a benchmarking exercise at Baglan Bay, the WGM announced eighty redundancies amongst manual workers. Restructuring also involved the removal of bargaining rights and introduction of single-staff status. Individual interviews took place with manual workers who were given twenty four hours to accept the terms offered and it was made clear that only those who were prepared to sign individual contracts were likely to retain their jobs. The TGWU called for a ballot on industrial action, but stewards were refused entry on site to distribute ballot papers (Tuckman, 1998).

> front with the *support* of the workforce. At Baglan we adopted a very directive approach where survival was very much the theme and everybody realised this
>
> Here it was totally different (...) to go forward and to say to people in a Grangemouth environment, "here's a contract you *will* (sign). " would have been tantamount to disaster with the trade union. So it was absolutely vital that we had a different strategy. So the strategy we developed was quite different. It was one of persuasion. We will progressively persuade people".

The "soft" rhetoric of HRM emerging at corporate level offered a range of metaphors that could be drawn upon in this persuasive context to manage how recipients would understand and evaluate the idea of individual contracts and loss of bargaining rights. Data revealed that this rhetoric provided a critical discursive resource to the senior team and both shaped and was shaped by current discursive practices at the plant. Strategies for change were framed by a top-down "indoctrinative" approach (Bate, 1994) that built upon the metaphors of "team" and "single status" and sought to obfuscate the lack of free will in accepting the new management ideology (see page 174). This strategy was devised by a task force of senior managers and chaired by the head of HRM. Based on what was called an "opportunistic approach", change agents on the task force were very aware that participant interpretations were context dependent.

The following sections show ways in which they consciously sought to manipulate the contexts within which change emerged as well as the constraining features of such contexts.

Wider socio-political and economic climates

The prevailing ideological position of the then Conservative government provided an important backdrop within which an HRM discourse could effectively challenge dominant discursive practices at BPGR. Importantly, recent changes in employment law had progressively restricted workers ability to take industrial action and offered less support for the extension of collective bargaining. Changes in economic and labour market conditions were also hostile to trade union growth and influence in UK businesses as noted in chapter two, and these provided important environmental conditions within which union de-recognition could be legitimised.

However opinion polls showed an increasing likelihood of a new Labour Government, and the implications of this were made clear by the HR manager;

> "We achieved harmonisation within a very tight time scale. (Between April - September 1995) We could have taken longer. But the world doesn't wait anymore, and there were other agendas. Let's be honest, there were political agendas. We were not going to do this with a Labour Government coming in. There were drivers to this.
>
> There were big political issues, lots of things going around. There was a lot of lobbying with individuals to avoid problems. We stressed that this was to be a voluntary process and we managed it very carefully. In that sense it was very successful, we hit all our criteria and there was no great fuss in the press".

Management was in a powerful position to " hit their criteria" - shape organisational members' interpretive frames in order to ensure that opposition to their plans was downplayed or did not arise in the first place. They were able to draw upon concepts of HRM grounded in the Conservative government's notion of the "enterprise culture" and sector recipe evident within the oil and chemicals industry (noted earlier). In addition, BPGR was in a "healthy financial position" according to the WGM, providing him with important economic leverage for change. Having survived an economic downturn during 1989/1990, BP now enjoyed a growth product market and high profit levels. By 1994 the BP Group had boosted its productivity by fifty percent and the chemicals business increased its operating profit threefold, to eight hundred and fifty four million (BP Chemicals World, January 1995). The WGM had considerable resources placed at his disposal that provided an important source of instrumental and symbolic power mobilised to manage meaning at BPGR. This included expenditure on the employment of specialist media consultants in the deployment of sophisticated communications packages geared towards the structuring of understandings at the plant (page 174).

Employment practices and industrial relations climate

Given the "strategic" importance attributed to BPGR, the WGM felt that the threat of industrial action and unwanted media attention were important constraints upon discursive change at the plant. Avoiding these problems was difficult because of the extent of local union influence and the current industrial relations within the plant.

Consistent with extant research (Storey, 1992; Brown, 1998), Brown was aware that acceptance of change "helps if the businesses is underperforming". He explained that BP Oil (Grangemouth) was in a better position than BPGR to legitimise whole-scale organisational change on the basis that the refinery was "behind best practice for the industry", industrial relations climate was "adversarial" and the refinery "was under performing". These "trigger" conditions were not evident at the chemicals plant.

In contrast, BPGR's site performance was described as "excellent" compared against a recent industry survey, and the improvements made in working practices since 1992 could be quoted as a testament to the good industrial relations between management and trade unions within the plant. Under these circumstances strategies at BPGR centred round an "opportunistic approach" based on "voluntary" acceptance of change triggered by changes taking place first at the refinery;

> "The refinery had a much more difficult situation to deal with. It is no secret that they went first, and tactically that was intentional to allow them to go first. We had good relations with the trade unions here on Grangemouth Chemicals site while BP Oil was more adversarial in their approach. Therefore it was vital that they made the move first and tried to persuade the workforce, and they had a vehicle that said that this refinery was not performing" (WGM).

BPGR Managers waited until "enquiries" were made by employees about the likelihood of change taking place at BPGR before launching a communications programme initiated by a letter to all staff;

> (...) In view of BP Oil's announcement and the interest it has generated in BP Chemicals we believe there is an opportunity to explore the issue in greater depth to see that you will have full understanding of what is to be a " Staff" employee in our organisation" (Letter from WGM to staff, 5 October 1994).

Following successful implementation of change at the refinery in August 1994, the WGM at the chemicals plant was now able to put forward his vision for the site, and "engineer" employee acceptance of individual contracts. An evaluation of this process is presented below and shows how leaders of strategic change both shape and are shaped by their internal and external organisational contexts. This is illustrated by evidence that the strategy to first remove collective bargaining at BP Oil helped shape perceptions of the role of trade unions at BPGR. Despite a high trade union density amongst production workers at BPGR, changes at BP Oil led them to question the power of the

unions to protect their interests, reflected in statements made by the TGWU convenor and one production worker as they recalled the events at that time;

> "It was a surprise that the refinery accepted individual contracts, because we thought they were big strong people who would be able to resist it" (TGWU convenor).

> "There has been a swing away from the union in recent years, and now they have lost bargaining rights at BP Oil. The union seems to have lost its strength. But what everybody seems to forget is that the union is a strong as the people that are in it" (Production operator).

A key aim of the "One Team" initiative was to build upon views observed by the production operator noted above, and weaken the perceived role of trade unions as a protective device in the eyes of the workforce. Although the senior team recognised that union influence was perceived to be weaker than evidenced in the 1980s, union density remained high and bargaining procedures symbolised the dominance of pluralist values and assumptions amongst production workers. The implications were that;

> "BP Chemicals was seen as the last Bastion of trade unionism in the UK and the move to single status could have become a major political issue" (member of the senior team).

Brown reported a "strong trade union mentality within the plant" and that shop steward influence over employee attitudes and behaviours remained relatively strong. Comment from one HRM adviser illustrated the effects of this influence;

> "Shop stewards act as a bar to that extra mile that we want to go (...). For example we tried to get people to come along to a residential course overnight, and let them go through a series of discussions and role plays just to test their skills in becoming a future team leader or whatever. The union didn't help us a great deal in that process. People had to get paid overtime for this. If they didn't then the union would discourage them from going".

This statement reflected an entrenched instrumentalism towards work amongst industrial staff that was reinforced by an engineering discourse that gave primacy to negotiation over the effort-reward bargain. While constrained by this discourse, change agents were also able to alter it through the production of an HRM discourse. This built upon recently negotiated concepts of efficiency and flexibility, but also challenged pluralist assumptions through the creation of a new text that presumes a much closer

identity of interests between parties involved. The capacity of HRM discourse to shape meaning in this way (notably influence employee perceptions of the legitimacy of unions) is examined below.

HRM and the reconstruction of employee relations

Having worked toward providing legitimacy to a new "world view" of the organisation amongst managerial grades, Brown started to communicate his vision to the shopfloor through a staged series of "Fact Sheets"(Table 5.4) and factory briefing sessions. Information packs were produced by members of the task force (page 170), and were compiled with the help of external media consultants. These communications were primarily addressed to production staff suggesting an implicit understanding amongst change agents that the interests and values of middle and operational managers were the same as the top team.

Table 5.4	**Fact Sheets about One Team**
June	Site vision What is Harmonisation The Continued Role for Trade Unions
3 July	Manufacturing Team Concept: Technician Training and Development Additional Hours Working
10 July	Transfer onto Staff Grading System Reward and Recognition
31 July	The Financial Package Voting Card for/against Harmonisation

The rhetoric of HRM provided an important rival discourse that framed the formal articulation of the site vision in a letter to all industrial staff in the summer of 1995 (table 5.2). The restructuring of work and the signing of single-staff contracts was justified in terms of market pressures and the need to develop new ways of working which could encourage innovation, flexibility and customer responsiveness. Characterised by "initiative conversations" (Ford and Ford, 1995), the letter comprised assertions, requests, and declarations that focused attention on how employees should

"make sense" of certain environmental conditions and what was required of them to ensure future success of the business.

> *(Assertion)* " Through difficult times we have emerged as a key manufacturing centre for the Company and it is vital that we maintain that position as we pursue our vision for the future. *(Declaration)* The vision is that " we will sustain a reputation as a World Class Manufacturing Performer". This must take account of good and bad times and I believe it can be achieved through the process of continuous improvement and the personal development of us all".
>
> *(Request)* "Harmonisation is a logical step in support of our vision through a One Team Approach (...) However, I also recognise that it can only be achieved with your full understanding, involvement and support. *(Declaration)* I believe that this next phase in the Site's continuing development is crucial and will be of mutual benefit to employees and Company alike as we move together as One Team in pursuit of World Class Performance".

A major symbol of the new enterprise culture reflected in such statements, was the team metaphor that offered a convenient device to integrate functional and constructive texts framing strategies for change. In one sense, the word "team" was used to advance the case for "single-status", and acted as a rhetorical device to create an image of equality and harmony and the development of employee development, consistent with the constructive text. This was encapsulated by the phrase "One Team" which was prominently displayed on all information packs and letters to production staff, and constituted a logo of a number one, together with the words;

"One Team, Benefits You, Benefits Your Site"

In another sense, and consistent with the functional text, the team concept was used to emphasise the need to create more efficient work groups that could "add value" to the business and improve plant reliability. Teams were promoted as the primary performance unit in the organisation in order to "achieve and sustain world class manufacturing" ("Manufacturing Team Concept – Technician"). Drawing upon the constructive and functional text types in this fashion allowed change agents to manage the contradictions of HRM. Statements about the nature of change thus focused on both the "opportunities" for personal advancement as well as the role of the individual as a source of competitive advantage;

> "People are our most valuable asset and by developing their skills and competencies we will achieve and sustain world class manufacturing (...) Technician grades are a means of recognising and rewarding the enhanced role

> of individuals as they develop these skills and competencies" (Fact Sheet: Technician Concept).

The harsher outcomes associated with the drive to increase organisational flexibility and efficiency were obfuscated by a rhetoric of "tough love" which Legge defines as one that;

> " seeks to co-opt the assent of both those who may suffer as well as those who may benefit from its effects" (Legge 1989: 40).

In this instance, it meant likely job losses amongst the position of first line manager and removal of bargaining rights in return for single status terms and conditions that offered personal advancement and the long-term survival and growth of the chemicals plant[64];

> " The Site is performing well, but there is little room for complacency. As we continue to make improvements in our own performance, so do our major competitors, and that is why the continuous improvement theme is so vital to us all" (Fact Sheet: Harmonisation for Grangemouth Employees).

> "The development of the individual without constraint will enable us to keep pace with technological advances. In turn this enhances the prospects of capital investment and the long-term future of the Site" (Fact Sheet: "Single Staff Status")

Statements about the pursuit of organisational competitiveness were juxtaposed with management promises to break "glass ceilings". The term referred to perceived barriers held amongst organisational participants to the promotion of manual workers to non-manual positions. Talk of breaking this "glass ceiling" reflected an appeal for the re-ordering of discursive practices and mechanisms for culture change that could signal the creation of a "single status culture", a key theme underlying briefings about the intended nature of change. "Single status" in this sense became a metaphor to describe a new management regime in which all employees could be expected to;

> "Be given the opportunity to develop your skills and competencies to help you realise your full potential" (Fact Sheet- What is Harmonisation).

[64] While the removal of the FLM meant the elimination of a shift management layer, there remained a requirement to provide a day resource to facilitate production and maintenance co-ordination and training. The overall net effect was projected to be a reduction of approximately twenty people from the ranks of ex-FLM, but this information was restricted to senior managers at the time (Internal management report).

The generic job title of technician also served to convey a break away from traditional distinctions made between production operators and maintenance staff, and a move towards the new culture. In the words of one production worker;

> "At the time, the new job titles and the new grading system made us feel *special*. And if you went to a party, and people asked what you do at work, it meant something to say that you were a manufacturing technician, rather than a process worker. They were impressed, after all, it sounds much better!"

Change agents made recourse to plain speaking (Kamoche, 1995a) in addition to the rhetoric noted above, which offered the potential to provide meaning and legitimacy to plans for union de-recognition amongst industrial staff. Statements about single status and harmonisation were phrased in an intentionally objective form in order to prescribe "acceptable" definitions of reality that offered little room for ambiguity and which sought to cushion the experience of losing rights to collective representation;

> "I would like to stress that " Single Staff Status" is not an exercise aimed at elimination of the Trade Unions. The Unions will continue to have a role to play on your behalf on the Site should you so wish" (Letter to staff, 5th October 1994)

> "Harmonisation is often mistakenly referred to as Union de-recognition or perceived as an attack on Trade Union rights. This is not the case, and on harmonisation, existing Trade Unions will continue to play an important and valuable role for the Site and its employees alike." (Factsheet: Continued Role of the Trade Unions, June 1995)

Videos and a series of briefing sessions supported written communications of the kind described above. They gave the WGM and his senior team a high profile as they sought to persuade production workers of what they saw as the logic of their decisions as well as the long-term vision for the site. As the WGM explained;

> "We spent three months communicating the new site vision. I said this is where I would like to get to, and I would like to share this with you during the next several months and involve you in describing what it means to be in a self managed team, and work as technicians etc. And at the end of that I am going to ask you if you want to join us in a harmonised site. You will have a choice then. It is voluntary and we will go for a vote".

While these communications sought to create a managerialist "world view" of the employment relationship, they were open to multiple readings amongst industrial staff as they drew upon their past and current experiences to make sense of the new rhetoric. Consistent with Grant's analysis (Grant, 1999), positive responses to management

promises of autonomy and personal enhancement were more evident amongst younger serving employees with limited work experience at the plant[65]. Data revealed that some found it difficult to resist attractive promises of employee involvement, or to challenge such new concepts until they were located in their own concrete experiences.

These results are consistent with Collin's observations of two case studies in which the construction of a "set overlap" between managers and younger production workers "appeared to be relatively easy during the early implementation of change" (Collins, 1999). For example, one respondent commented that they were more likely to demonstrate attachment to the idea of "having a career, not just a job" unlike longer serving colleagues to whom the rhetoric had less appeal (see page 174). Promoted to the position of team leader during the autumn of 1995, he explained that;

> "The younger people hadn't seen it all before. When I say younger, I mean new to the factory- young in years to the factory. The older guys that have been here longer have seen it all before and tried to tell them that management won't deliver what they promise.
>
> (...) Although the money was important, the younger guys listened to the propaganda and to some extent believed it. They got the guys to believe that we were going to be part of something *special*. That they could be individuals who could shoot for the stars".

This statement suggested that communications orchestrated by management did have some effect on re-defining the organisation and its environment in a particular way that could not be sufficiently contested by more sceptical production workers and their trade union leaders. In this context the TGWU convenor felt that the unions were unable to match the resources used by Brown to privilege certain themes and issues over others and suppress alternative views;

> " Some folk think that the union didn't do enough because management was flooding the place with glossies. It was unbelievable the stuff they put out. They had four people off duty locked in a room in GDC[66], and their whole thoughts were spent just churning it out. We can't compete with that. All I could do was go and speak to guys on the night shift."

---

[65] Refers to data gathered from focus group interviews held with technicians shortly after a referendum on whether or not to accept individual contracts.
[66] Grangemouth Development Centre

Change agents were also able to draw upon sources of reward in order to draw attention away from competing "voices" (Putnam et al., 1999) illustrated below, that challenged the ideology underpinning One Team.

Alternative readings of "One Team" on the shopfloor

Older serving production workers indicated suspicions, voiced at focus group interviews, that "One Team" was designed to exploit shop floor workers by expecting them to work harder, and by removing the protection of the union. Others commented on the "faddish" nature of change, and inherent differences between management and workers;

> "(...) Change is about achieving more flexibility on the shopfloor, getting us to work harder, plus saving on foreman's wages".
>
> "Historically they have come up with other packages every now and again. What was the last one? Get it right first time. That sort of thing. It may last for about two or three years and then all of a sudden it is abandoned".
>
> "We have had the skills development programme, we've had benchmarking. We are on One Team. What is next once this fad has died away?"
>
> The idea of "*one* team" makes little sense. There will always be differences between us and management (...). We are supposed to be in the same team as those guys out there, but we are not; this is our team (points to the work area), this is what *we* mean by a team".

Data indicated that generous incentives helped to generate a "feel good" factor for individual union members, obviating the need for workers to engage in critical discussion in which competing readings of HRM of the kind noted above, could be raised. The result was that;

> "Union meetings were in some cases poorly attended as a number of industrial staff had already been influenced by the big financial package on offer" (TGWU convenor).

Incentives included promises of an increase of six percent on basic pay, additional bonuses related to BP gain share schemes (previously only available to staff) plus a two thousand pounds bonus for going on to a personal contract ("Reward and Recognition", July 1995). Reassurances were also given that major compulsory redundancies would not occur as a direct result of change. According to the TGWU convenor, these

"carrots" were perceived to be the biggest single influence that led to a (slim) majority vote in favour of ending the collective agreement.

> "... with the money they threw about it was very hard for people (...) the average person picked up three thousand pounds. Two and a half thousand lump sum, and we got paid our holidays that used to be paid in arrears. So if you had got ten days holiday due, you got paid for these. This was a lot of money, plus there was a six percent increase in salary. They guaranteed us a bonus in April, no matter how your assessment went. They guaranteed that as well as a rise in April."

The appeal to worker's financial motives were clearly important and appeared to sway those people who were drawn to the "new reality" created by management. However, while immediate financial gains were attractive in themselves, they were also likely to legitimise a rhetoric that talked of "removing glass ceilings" and advancement to those who worked hard;

> (Team leader) "People have been influenced by all the communications, but the cash is also very important, particularly amongst the younger guys who want to buy a house".
>
> (Union convenor) "Although the money is important, the younger guys believe in the propaganda. They have brainwashed people into thinking and believing that they can progress easily onto the new grades and earn more".

Following the events described above, industrial staff in favour of those terms and conditions outlined below made a majority vote. Collective bargaining ceased and the new terms and conditions took effect from the beginning of September 1995[67].

[67] It was generally understood that there was a slim majority and the exact proportion "for" the change was not publicised.

Table 5.5 Statements about Single Status Terms and Conditions

All process and maintenance employees were to become manufacturing technicians and would be expected to; "Broaden and deepen their existing skills and knowledge to reflect requirements of the area in which they work. The formation of self-directed teams is key to the Technician concept, and individuals will be trained in the new skills necessary to implement these teams".

Employees were encouraged to take ownership of their own personal development, and a Personal Development Planning Process was to be put in place to assist this.

Collective bargaining was to be replaced by individual contracts and industrial staff were to be rewarded through a combination of individual, team, business and company performance measures. Individual pay would be linked to performance and progression through a skills matrix defined as a "competency map". Management gave assurances that during the next phase of change, technicians would be involved in the definition of their new roles, the formulation of competency maps and training programmes (via "issue teams").

A guarantee was given of no compulsory redundancies associated with harmonisation for a three-year period.

Individuals retained the right to belong, or not to belong to a Trade Union. A Representative Agreement was signed that gave rights to the individual to be represented by the AEEU, GMB and TGWU in matters of health and safety, and grievance and disciplinary issues.

The Employee Forum constituted two years previously would continue to operate and act through elected employee representatives as the primary body for formal consultation with the whole workforce on matters of importance affecting everyone on the Site. The forum, formed in line with European legislation, met quarterly, and nominated delegates to attend the company's annual European works council. Eighty percent of the staff representatives were shop stewards, although management expected this proportion to drop

Technicians were to become eligible to join a range of BP share ownership schemes geared towards encouraging interest in company performance and developing a sense of identity. These included an Individual Bonus based on individual performance, A Business/Product Bonus Scheme and access to BP Chemicals Gainshare Scheme.

The Head of HRM described the outcome of the vote as "successful". There were sufficient numbers of production workers persuaded to believe that the ideal of single-status was obtainable, or at least prepared to accept the rhetoric on a "wait and see basis", for a majority vote in favour of the new terms and conditions. While the ballot indicated that a significant minority did not share the "reality" created by senior

managers, cessation of collective bargaining effectively destroyed a powerful cultural artefact in which the control discourse was embedded, allowing for further diffusion of a particular version of HRM discourse favoured by the top team. Shared understandings however, were only partial and open to continual re-interpretation as organisational participants sought to reach agreement on developing action plans for change, and implementing these. These processes have been clustered under the second phase of change examined below.

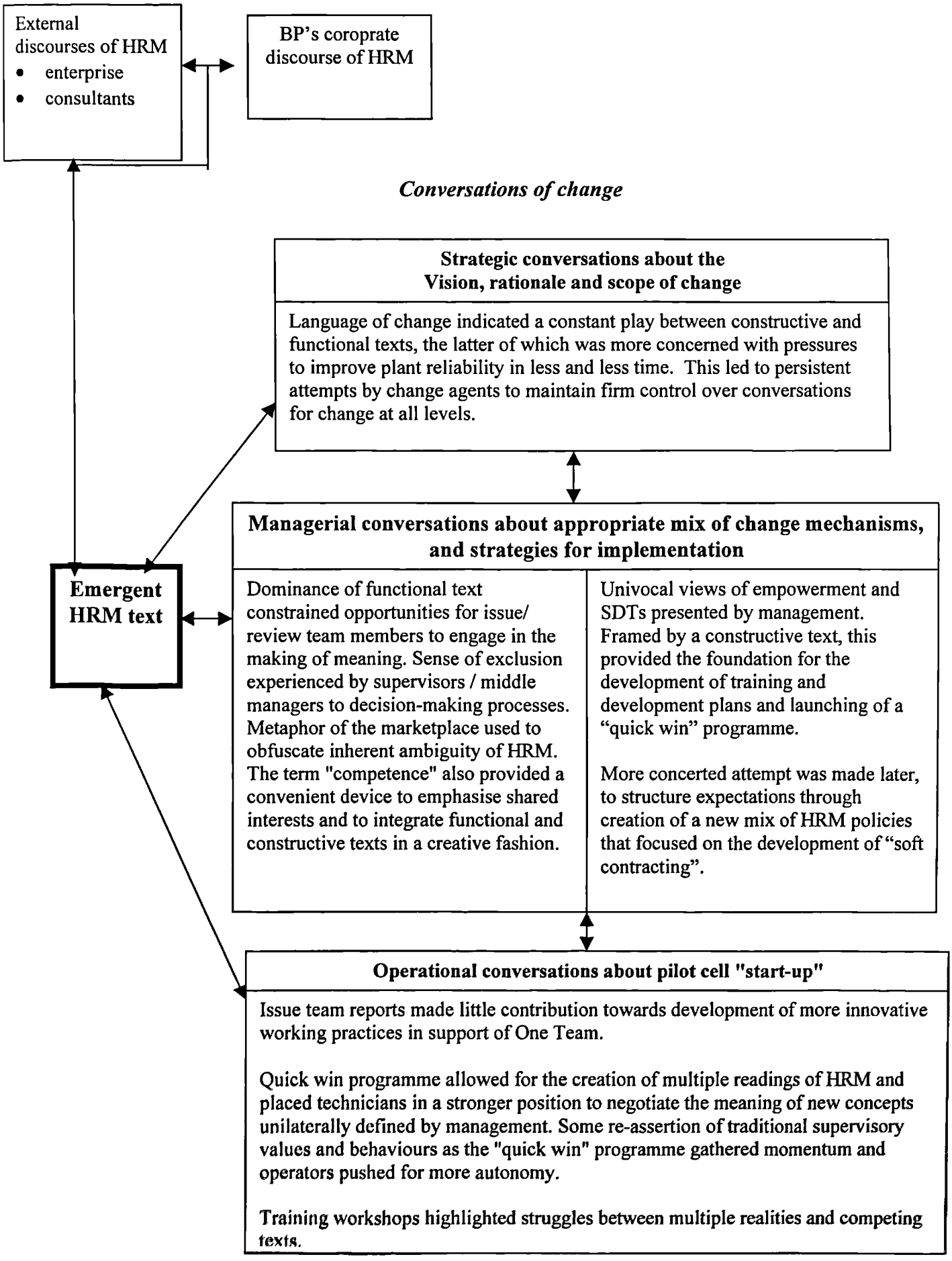
5.3 Transforming HRM at BPGR

This third section analyses the second phase of change at BPGR which was characterised by hegemonic struggle as implementation strategies were formed and technicians were encouraged to test out new ideas (figure 5.3). Attention is drawn to the multifaceted and ambiguous nature of HRM, and ways in which the text of HRM was continuously produced and reproduced through the interplay of workplace conversations.

In the early stages of One Team, the text of change focused on creating acceptance of the need for change in working practices and the de-legitimation of collective union-based employee relations. An analysis of the second phase of change examines how the discourse around "One Team" developed as change agents introduced the concepts of empowerment and competence which built upon the metaphors of "team", "single status" and "breaking glass ceilings" noted earlier. It is explained that as new concepts were introduced and meanings multiplied, a key concern amongst change agents was to foster consensus and unity of meaning, manifested in the "policing" of processes of employee involvement and the development of a mix of HRM policies that facilitated moves towards discursive closure.

Figure 5.3

Phase two of change: transformation of HRM



5.3.1 Promoting a univocal interpretation of HRM

Like the initial stage of change, emphasis continued to be placed on "bringing industrial staff on board" with less attention being given to the views of more junior managers. Efforts to broaden support and commitment of production staff to change centred on the establishment of committee structures that were described by members of the top team as "a bottom up approach to change". This included a network of sixteen " issue teams", drawn from each manufacturing area as shown in figure 5.4. These were formed in November 1995 with the remit to define technician team roles and identify training requirements for each manufacturing area.

Issue teams were also expected to identify what "supporting roles" were needed to facilitate the removal of the FLM position and creation of SDTs (they were advised that this position would be phased out over a period of two years). Findings from each issue team were to be fed into three site-wide review teams responsible for the development of training strategies, competency frameworks for technician grades, and a policy on supplementary pay. [68] The network of task forces was co-ordinated by a " Core Team" of senior managers who used a number of controls over processes of communication and consultation. These allowed them to manipulate definitions of the concept of empowerment introduced to the vocabulary of change at this time, and which framed messages about the importance of "grass roots participation".

Attempts to control the interpretation as well as production of HRM text reflected the concern articulated by the WGM of the need for control over local and divergent definitions of SDTs emerging amongst issue teams which were widely dispersed throughout plant (shown below). Thompson, the Core Team Leader explained that Brown "reacted very strongly" to his intention to present comprehensive feedback about local issue team discussions during site-wide briefings;

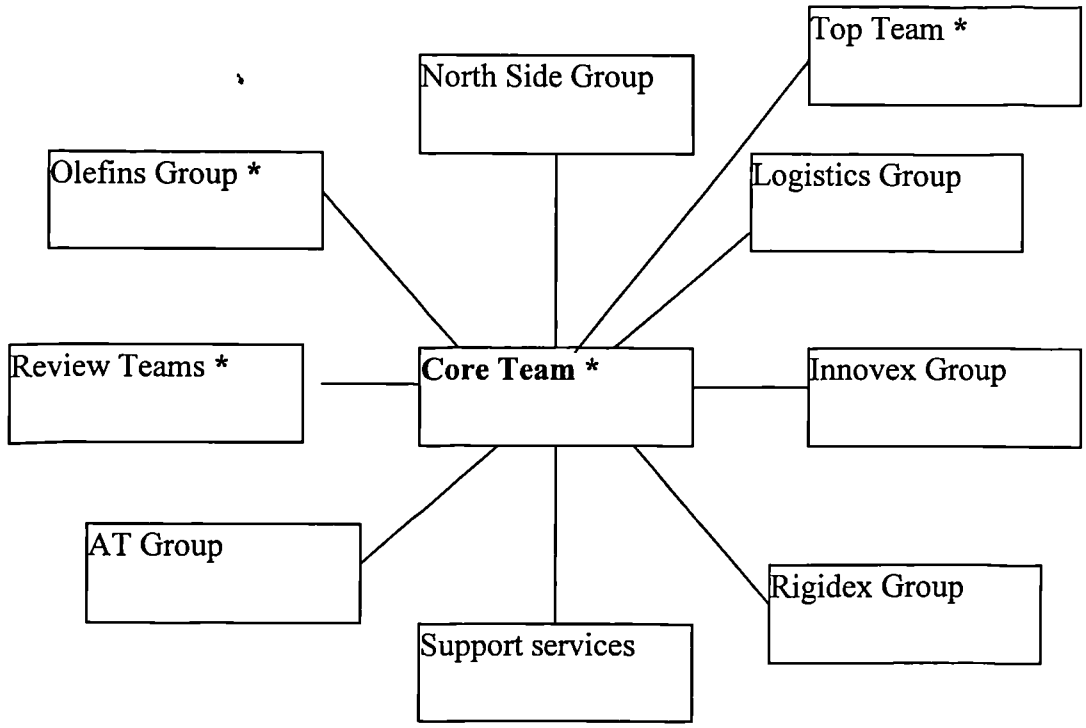
> "Review teams immediately started to discuss the more sensitive areas of training and development, supplementary payments, and competency maps that

[68] Issue team members were "volunteers" nominated by management and drawn mostly from the ranks of technician, with smaller representation of FLMs and junior engineers. Review teams included employee representatives from all levels from across the site, and HRM specialists. Issue teams were chaired by "issue team leaders" drawn from the ranks of junior engineer.

> Brown wanted to keep at the end of the agenda.[69] He said "I want to see the technician concept, and I want to see the self-directed team as the focal point for any communication we do". He was worried both about how the message would be received and that we had taken our eye of the ball. (...) The upshot was that within a few days we produced a brief which put the technician concept and self-directed team concept up front, and put the other information in as background information, or supplementary information".

It was within this context that Thompson began to exert more control over discursive practices that meant exerting influence over decision-making structures, and the timing, scope and nature of decisions taken by issue teams. These activities helped to prevent contentious decisions raising to the surface in the first place, and the development of a managerially derived discourse that downplayed differences of interests between managers and workers.

Figure 5.4 Structures for employee involvement



* Key informants were drawn from the two issue teams established within the Olefins area (KG and G4 areas), review and core teams, and the top management team.

[69] Data revealed much contention about the likely loss of hour for hour overtime payments in order that a supplementary pay policy could be aligned with current arrangements for non-manual staff who were paid a post specific allowance for being on an "on call" list.

Specific guidance was given to issue team participants about the meaning to be attributed to certain terms included notions of "core technical knowledge" and "additional skills", and led to some frustration expressed by one issue team leader about a lack of open debate;

> "There appears to be discrepancies between what individual Teams see as Core Technical Knowledge. Would it be better for each Team to draw their own conclusions, rather than being "advised" of what subjects are Core Technical Knowledge, and which are Additional Flexibilities? Our team considered skills such as explosimeter testing, lamping skills and hydraulic access operations as core, yet they have been moved out" (Olefins North First Interim Report, 21st December 1985).

Multiple readings of such terms was further constrained by tight time scales within which issue teams representatives were expected to agree on action plans, consult with people in their local area, and report back to the core team (appendix seven).[70]

Thompson justified such action because;

> "You need to get the balance right (between co-ordinating and steering activities). This meant that they were times we took on a bit of a policing role and had to advise teams that "sorry this is not what you have been asked to look for, or no you are not to look that unit at the moment".

This statement illustrates a key paradox of "One Team": although the espoused aim was one of "involvement", the language of change indicated a constant play between constructive and functional texts, the latter of which was more concerned with pressures to improve plant reliability in less and less time. It meant persistent attempts by change agents to maintain firm control over learning processes. This paradox surrounding the degree of learner autonomy was an issue raised by several members of core and issue teams. For example, one senior manager troubled with managing change from both economic and humanist standpoints talked of the need for a "measure of consistency" in new working arrangements across Site but recognised;

> "(...) the danger with the time scales within which people are looking for things to be done , of stifling creative energy."

[70] Two interim reports were scheduled, one late December, the other in January, followed by a final report in March 1996.

Within this context, reports compiled by each issue team were described as "limited" by one HR adviser, in the sense that they failed to express any creative ideas about how to translate the concept of self directed team into practice. Nevertheless statements about the efficacy of issue teams became important rhetorical devices used to sanction the creation of a managerially defined text of change that framed role descriptions, action plans and progress reports presented by the core team. The latter were carefully structured in order to promote a unitary view of change, and to downplay the more contentious issues arising within review teams associated with supplementary pay and grading of employees.

> "Issue Team reports are very comprehensive and we are confident that the teams have thoroughly addressed all of the key issues" (Information sheet to all staff, May 1996).
>
> "Your involvement in the process to date has played an essential part in bringing the original "One Team" vision to life" (Information sheet to all staff, May 1996).

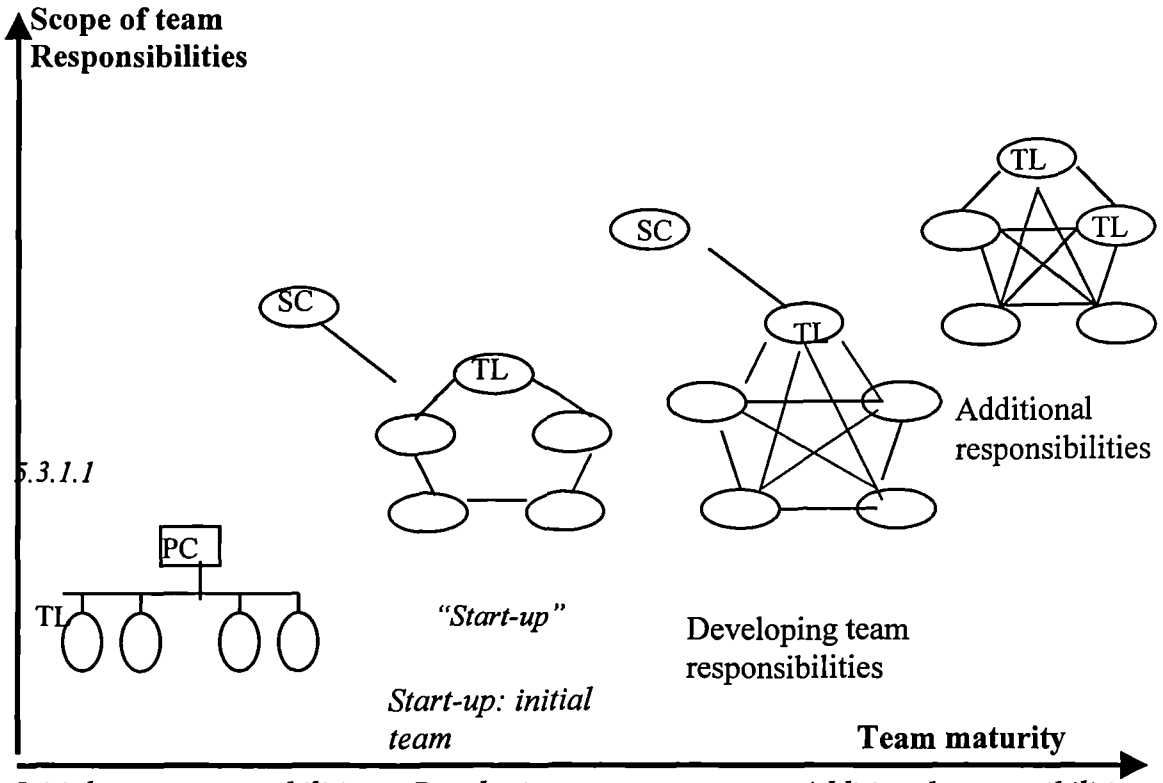
Factory-wide briefings took place in March 1996, and were followed by the circulation of information packs to shopfloor workers. Role descriptions (appendix eight) and a working model of SDTs were presented in an intentionally objective form that offered little room for ambiguity over terms. This formal presentation of how senior managers saw the development of SDTs represented the first structured view of empowerment to emerge at BPGR and operated to close off meaning as far as other organisational participants were concerned. The obscuring of alternative meanings was possible at a time when subordinates were unable to locate "empowerment" in any concrete experience of participation at BPGR. Consistent with the work of Westwood (1987), employees were "unable to locate participation in any vital discourse of their own that offered an interrogative position vis-a-vis those positions provided by the proffered discourse" (1987:198).

The diagram shown in figure 5.5 maps how teams were expected by managers to progress and develop over time – a vision that had ostensibly been crafted by them with the help of their subordinates. First line managers, renamed shift co-ordinators (SC), were expected to play a critical position in the development of teams as shown. Once teams were self managing, the SC position would be phased out and ex-FLMs would

have the opportunity to retire early, or take up day positions amongst the ranks of engineer (operational manager). It was not made clear at this stage how many permanent engineering support roles would be required. Production team leaders would continue to be an integral member of the team but assume more administrative responsibilities presently carried out by the FLM.

Figure 5.5 Structuring empowerment

"Development of Self Directed Teams" : (Information sheet, May 1996)



Initial team responsibilities:

- planning and co-ordination
- procedures
- handovers
- appraisal
- cover arrangements
- resolution of conflict within team

Developing team responsibilities:

- training and coaching within team
- new night order book responsibilities
- new HSE activities
- IPMs/KPIs/Optimisation
- plant development

Additional responsibilities gained by teams as the SC evolves into the day manufacturing teams:

- emergency response co-ordination
- training and assessment
- team budget control
- group optimisation

5.3.2 HRM as process and outcome: the political dynamics of change

It was as action plans developed and manufacturing teams were encouraged to test out new ideas that technicians were more able to deconstruct the text of change and develop their own interpretations of empowerment. The processes by which action plans were developed were characterised by a struggle between the "homogenization process", in which meanings were fabricated by the core team, and the "heterogenization process" (Salzer-Morling, 1998), in which local meanings were constructed. This tension developed as technicians were given training in new skills that allowed them to test out new ideas and proposals.

Review teams had yet to develop an integrated set of HRM policies in support of the image of teamworking presented above. In the meantime a "Quick Win Programme" was launched in April 1996, inviting local issue teams to identify some immediate training requirements that would provide opportunities for an increase in their autonomy. The intention of this programme, Thompson explained, was that it symbolised that "something was happening", thus legitimising continuing investment by the company in the change effort, and justifying the move to single staff status in the eyes of technicians. Legitimisation of investment centred on the use of a functional text that acted as a symbolic device to render an image that the change initiative was based less on an "act of faith" and more an act of rational decision making. This was problematic given the difficulty change agents had in articulating the benefits of self directed teams. In the words of Thomson;

> "It is very difficult. I think that it is almost an act of faith. To a certain extent it is an act of faith, that through a programme like this you are looking to un-tap the hidden talent that is out there and the contribution that they can make. How you measure that at the end of the day is very difficult. But it needs to be *seen* to part of our overall improvement programme for the site, linked into the key performance indicators that we have got in terms of plant reliability, cost reduction, employee morale, production levels, and utilisation".

> "(...) I couldn't say publicly, but privately there is a justification that we need to follow, which looks at these key levers. And certainly when I talk to our business guys about what this will provide them, it needs to be articulated".

Another important function of the quick win programme was to provide "glimpses" of SDTs in action thus symbolising that the rhetoric of One Team was "real". Examples

included getting technicians onto the E-mail system, taking responsibility for electrical isolation, administrative duties (good housekeeping, looking after radio headsets), and special projects. An unintended affect of this dynamic was that it encouraged the creation of multiple readings of HRM at operational level. As technicians gained concrete experience of "self direction" it enabled them to construct their own definitions of empowerment and the self -directed team concept, placing them in a stronger position to question the "One Team" recipe espoused by the senior team. Data revealed that these processes of enactment allowed technicians to shape the interpretive frames of their immediate managers as well as themselves. The core team leader explained that;

> "There is some debate at the moment about the meaning of empowerment and the extent to which management are prepared to "let go". I think it comes back to setting boundaries, and trying to make it clear as to what is up for debate - what is clearly within their control, what areas that can be debated and what are the givens, the non negotiables. And we should be honest about this. We shouldn't allow the feeling to grow that self-directed teams means that they are totally self contained. We all have boundaries that we must operate within. Since the introduction of our quick wins programme, teams are trying to push against these boundaries, which is not such a bad thing. As they push against them, it helps us define them".

This narrative highlights the significance of conversations as a medium in the continuous process of learning and negotiation of meanings at the workplace. It also demonstrates that HRM provided a discursive resource that can be mobilised by subordinates as well as managers, thereby altering the state of play between constructive and functional texts, and between the inclusion and exclusion of subordinates in strategic and managerial and operational conversations. Nevertheless upward influence, described by Thompson as a "push from below" from the shopfloor, was bounded by more formal authority and control of resources that rested with operational managers;

> "The pace of change has been somewhat slow (...). We have still got a long way to go. In particular we need to bring our middle managers on board and develop their management style. At present there is a feeling amongst the guys (technicians) that they are unable to influence very much. If we are really going to get them involved beyond the surface, then we need to open up a lot more. We really do. The nervousness comes from the line not wanting to let go".

Thompson explained that supervisors remained attached to the old "command and control" style of management, which he attributed to their lack of involvement in decision making and poor understanding of change. Restricted access to both strategic

and managerial conversations of change meant limited opportunities to enter processes of "organisational sense-making" and the "making of meaning" which is an important aspect of organisational learning (Westley, 1990).

From this perspective Thomson considered that better communication and education was required to obtain acceptance by operational managers of change. However, while such an approach would allow for some exercise of "voice" these forums were unlikely to make them feel included in conversations about strategic intent, development of HRM practices and priorities for action. As Westley remarks:

> "If "man is an animal hanging in webs of significance he himself has spun" (Geertz, 1973: 5), then the difference in experience between receiving a directive without access to the framing rules which underlie that directive, and entering into a strategic conversation where frames are open to negotiation would be kin to the difference between being the fly caught in the web and the spider who spins the web " (Westley, 1990: 350).

Accounts of change presented by middle/operational managers themselves are consistent with Westley's suggestion that managers want to be included in strategic conversations not just because it strengthens their political power, but because it gives them access to "strategic sense making". This is illustrated by statements from issue team leaders within the KG and Olefins areas, who were very conscious of the lack of two-way influence between their "fellow engineers", and senior managers. As "issue team leaders" they had ready access to core team members, and therefore "a better feel for the big picture". In this sense and in contrast with their colleagues, they felt better connected and not excluded from strategic conversations;

> "I am able to talk to people external to my own group. Sometimes these are people relatively high up in the organisation, that you get some feel for particular topics, or get some information about things that the guys were asking for, that you yourself would not have had. We have had a member of the core team who was available to us throughout the whole programme, the head of human resources. He was extremely useful from my point of view"

A second issue team leader also described feelings of inclusion, noting an occasion when he attended a conference with the core team leader at which they gathered "very useful information, and understanding about evolution of teamworking"[71]. He explained

[71] He noted that of particular significance was a model of SDTs which provided the basis of a framework presented by the core team leader later that year.

that it was the issue team leader's responsibility to keep his "fellow engineers" involved and up-to-date, but that he personally had found this difficult because of time constraints. Both respondents commented on the need for "real consultation with first line managers and engineers", and the limited trust between these groups of managers and their seniors, despite the rhetoric of teamworking introduced under the VIP programme;

> "Job titles have changed but people seem to have the same jobs. A lot of senior managers are extremely capable and very used to running the show with their finger in absolutely every pie (...) That is the way they are used to working, but it makes life difficult for people like me".
>
> *(Interviewer) They have to go through the pain of learning to delegate?*
>
> "The pain of depending on those below them rather than knowing first hand for themselves. There is very limited trust".

While access to organisational sense making may have been important for reasons suggested above, respondents' accounts indicated that understanding was only one feature of the change process. Resistance to change was also rooted in competing orientations and self-interests amongst managers that from a constructionist perspective can not be simply be viewed as irrational or misplaced. For example as technician teams began to assume more responsibilities, FLMs were more able to deconstruct and challenge the espoused rhetoric of One Team, revealing the more functionalist and negative outcomes of change associated with loss of status and job security. While they may have "understood" the need for change therefore, they were not necessarily prepared to alter their attitudes and behaviours. This is illustrated by comments from one FLM who reflected concerns about the temporary nature of the positions to which FLM's were being transferred;[72]

> "There are sixteen controllers (FLMs) in KG, but only a few engineering support roles will be required. Management expect us to work ourselves out of a job!"

Similar sentiments were expressed by an engineering team leader (Olefins area) three months later;

> " There was a lot of uncertainty amongst FLMs and people in the engineering team at the start of One Team. It was particularly hard for FLMs, as their job

[72] In the G4 area six out of the twelve SC positions were to be phased out altogether, and the remaining six were to become supporting roles (process, training, and maintenance roles).

was to make themselves redundant. As an organisation, we did not handle that particularly well. We didn't reassure them well enough".

Fear of a loss of status and job security was also evident at that time amongst established engineers and their team leaders as they continued to follow a " command and control" style on the one hand while on the other technician teams pushed for more autonomy. This dynamic reflected relations of contestation and struggle between old and new texts, and the ascendancy of a highly instrumental approach to managing human resources as supervisors began to reassert their managerial prerogative. The TGWU convenor reported increasing evidence of a "macho management" style reflected in a growth in employee grievances over the previous twelve months. Examples included unilateral decisions being made by engineers about the cancelling of holiday leave because of operational requirements.

Technicians interviewed within KG and G4 manufacturing plants made similar comments and explained that;

> "It is still difficult to voice your opinion. We were all told when we got out of One Team meetings last month that we would all be the same, we would all be equal. We are not. If anything, things have got worse. And morale is very low. Things have got to get *moving* to make people believe things are going to change (Process technician, G4 area)."

5.3.3 Further development of hegemonic control

Within a climate of uncertainty and conflict, the launching of a new mix of HRM policies produced under the slogan, "Developing People, Raising Performance", signalled an attempt by the core team to foster consensus and unity of meaning across different levels of management, and beyond to the shopfloor. Broadly similar to the model of "high commitment management" identified by Wood (Wood and Albanese, 1995; Wood 1995), the new policy mix aimed to create commitment amongst managers and their subordinates to the personal development planning of technicians, their appraisal, on-the-job coaching, and allocation of individualised pay awards. Moreover, engineering teams were restructured to allow "coaches" to be drawn from the ranks of graduate engineers and ex-first line managers to assume responsibility for facilitating the development and autonomy of technician teams. A coaching forum was established

to oversee this process and comprised a cross section of approximately sixty coaches on site[73].

The rhetoric framing the new policy mix, outlined in table 5.6, built upon the promises made during the harmonisation phase, and effectively stirred up emotions and ambitions amongst some of the younger serving technicians illustrated by the following remarks from two team leaders;

> *(interviewer) During the start-up phase of One Team, what were people's expectations?*
>
> "We were going to be the greatest thing since sliced bread! We were all going to get mega-training".
>
> "Yes, they presented an image of a trainee on the process who could be an engineer in a couple of years – you are only four steps away from being a works general manager! And some of the younger guys were quite happy to take on as much as I could give them, and put their names forward for all the courses that were available (excel, e-mail and so on)".

Core team members recognised that longer serving employees and those in more senior positions were less attracted to the new management philosophy and viewed communication and education as pivotal to the realisation of new HRM policies. Mirroring phase one of change, a staged series of information packs emphasised the business case for change, drawing upon the metaphor of "the marketplace" to obfuscate the inherent ambiguity of HRM. These stressed the "strategic importance" of employees taking their personal development seriously for the performance of the organisation, and their own career prospects within the company;

> "In our introductory brief, we stressed that it is the performance of the people at Grangemouth that will ultimately drive Site performance and deliver the vision of the Site as a world class manufacturing performer.
>
> (...) It is vital therefore that all of our employees are encouraged and given the opportunity to develop and to maximise their contribution to Site performance" (Personal Development Factsheet).

[73] Ratio of professional engineers to ex-FLMs was approximately 60:40 respectively.

Table 5.6 "Developing People Raising Performance"

Recruitment and selection

"People Competencies" sought at the selection stage included trainability, flexibility, team-playership, and communication skills. Traditionally technician team leaders were promoted from the ranks of process workers on the basis of seniority and technical skill. Emphasis was now placed on team leadership skills and all technician staff were assessed by their ME team leader along with the FLM to determine technician team leader positions.

Internal labour market

Emphasis was placed on an internal market, which rewarded those employees who continued to demonstrate competencies shown at selection and/or application for re-grading via new competency maps. The HRM department promised to " undertake to provide confidential positive feedback to unsuccessful candidates. This is a vital part of the process, as you will have the opportunity to learn from the recruitment process and use the information you receive to build on specific areas of competence".

Commitment to Learning

A system of Personal Development Planning was launched that made use of the words "learning" and "development" to demonstrate employers willingness to view training in wider more flexible terms than merely the provision of skills training to cover short-term needs. Emphasis was placed on "the creation of a climate which encourages employees to take ownership of their own personal development (...). The benefit to you is that you are encouraged not only to maintain the appropriate competencies to meet the requirements of your current role, but also to develop for future roles".

Performance –related reward

Reward and recognition procedures were based on the premise that employees be rewarded for their individual and team contribution towards departmental and organisational performance. A performance management system was devised that was to provide the basis for regular dialogues between manager and subordinates about individual and team performance. Seventy percent of the performance evaluation was to be measured against individual objectives, while thirty percent was to be measured against seven key behaviours which described the way employees should go about their work: Teamwork and Flexibility, Innovation, Initiative, Customer Service, Working Standards, Communication, Team Leadership.

Competency matrices were presented as the foundation stone for the development of the full spectrum of HRM activities and were designed to cast off-limits a language of "command and control" that remained embedded in everyday talk about personnel matters. This was reflected by the re-labelling of common terms. For example technicians were exhorted to view their work as a "career" rather than as a "job"; training was defined as an opportunity for "personal development" rather than "skills development"; "pay" was replaced by the concept of "reward based on performance".

The new language of HRM signalling a shift away from "hard" to "soft" contracting (Tyson 1995), and like the concept of "team" examined earlier, the term "competence" provided a convenient device to emphasise shared interests and to integrate functional and constructive texts in a creative fashion. On one hand policy statements placed emphasis upon personal growth and development, and on the other a concern with performance management and tight control over individual activities. The latter values were reflected in a formal definition of competencies given below, which suggested that the new vocabulary had the potential to make subordinates more "knowable" and hence more manageable (Townley 1994, Holmes 1995);

> "Competencies are personal characteristics that when demonstrated, contribute to high performance in every job and can be measured and monitored."

The active participation of employees in personal development planning, and in rating their performance represented new possibilities for less obtrusive surveillance and discipline of employees or "disciplinary power" (Townley 1998). Performance measures were to be derived from a complex standard of attitudes, behaviours and attainments[74].

In addition to processes of communication, a four-phase development plan was "rolled out" that signalled the formal "start-up" to the implementation phase of One Team

[74] Seventy percent was to be measured against the individual's objectives, while thirty per cent was to be measured against seven key behaviours which described the way the individual should go about his/her work: Teamwork and Flexibility, Innovation, Initiative, Customer Service, Working Standards, Communication, Team Leadership. Performance was to be measured and expressed as a performance index between ten and one hundred. The index was reached by multiplying the score for each objective and behaviour by the relevant waiting. The performance index was to be the total of these numbers divided by ten.

which Thomson regarded as "critical" to bringing operational managers (including ex-FLMs) and their team leaders "on board". All manufacturing staff received a two-day development workshop where they discussed the concept of empowerment and took part in group discussions and role-plays. While different training courses took place for different levels of management and non-managerial staff, team leaders attended the training of their subordinates in order that they could "act as role models to the guys who expect them to be empowered leaders" (training manager).

In practice training sessions precipitated considerable conflict that remained unresolved amongst participants as they questioned the model of SDTs (Figure 5.5) upon which training was based. Debate centred on the more negative implications of empowerment that change agents had attempted to play down (the redundant role of the FLM and additional pressures being placed on middle managers). Struggles between competing positions were explained by one training officer in the form of a "lack of understanding";

> "There was a lack of understanding amongst engineers as to what we were trying to do - that self directed teams were not just a "nice to have", but were a critical source of competitive advantage.
>
> (...) We also had ex FLMs who are expected to coach technician teams and they challenged every concept we put forward. "It won't work, people will go backwards, people can't be trusted" (...) Technicians themselves challenged the need to remove the FLM. They felt that they were already working effectively as teams and could not see the benefits of removing the FLM".

Similarly one course participant reported that;

> "Training sessions just got bogged down in debate about the whole change in the session I attended, rather than about coaching per se. It was clear that a whole lot of FLM's had not yet been bought into the whole process" (Manufacturing Team leader).

The core team's difficulty in structuring the understandings of longer serving production operators and line managers was made more difficult because of mixed messages about priorities at more senior level, and which were rooted in changing corporate objectives examined in the next section.

5.4 Incorporation of HRM at BPGR

This final section presents an analysis of the third phase of change at BPGR, illustrated in figure 5.6, and characterised by attempts to institutionalise the discourse of competence in day-to-day operations and work routines. Consistent with the analysis of earlier phases of change, findings show that the conditions that made the text(s) of HRM more or less likely to be adopted as the natural language of the organisation were closely linked to wider social structures and the interplay between these and local power relations of the kind noted above. Of particular significance at this time were changes in corporate strategy triggered by changes in competitive pressures facing BP and the Oil industry generally, and shifts in the wider socio-political environment.

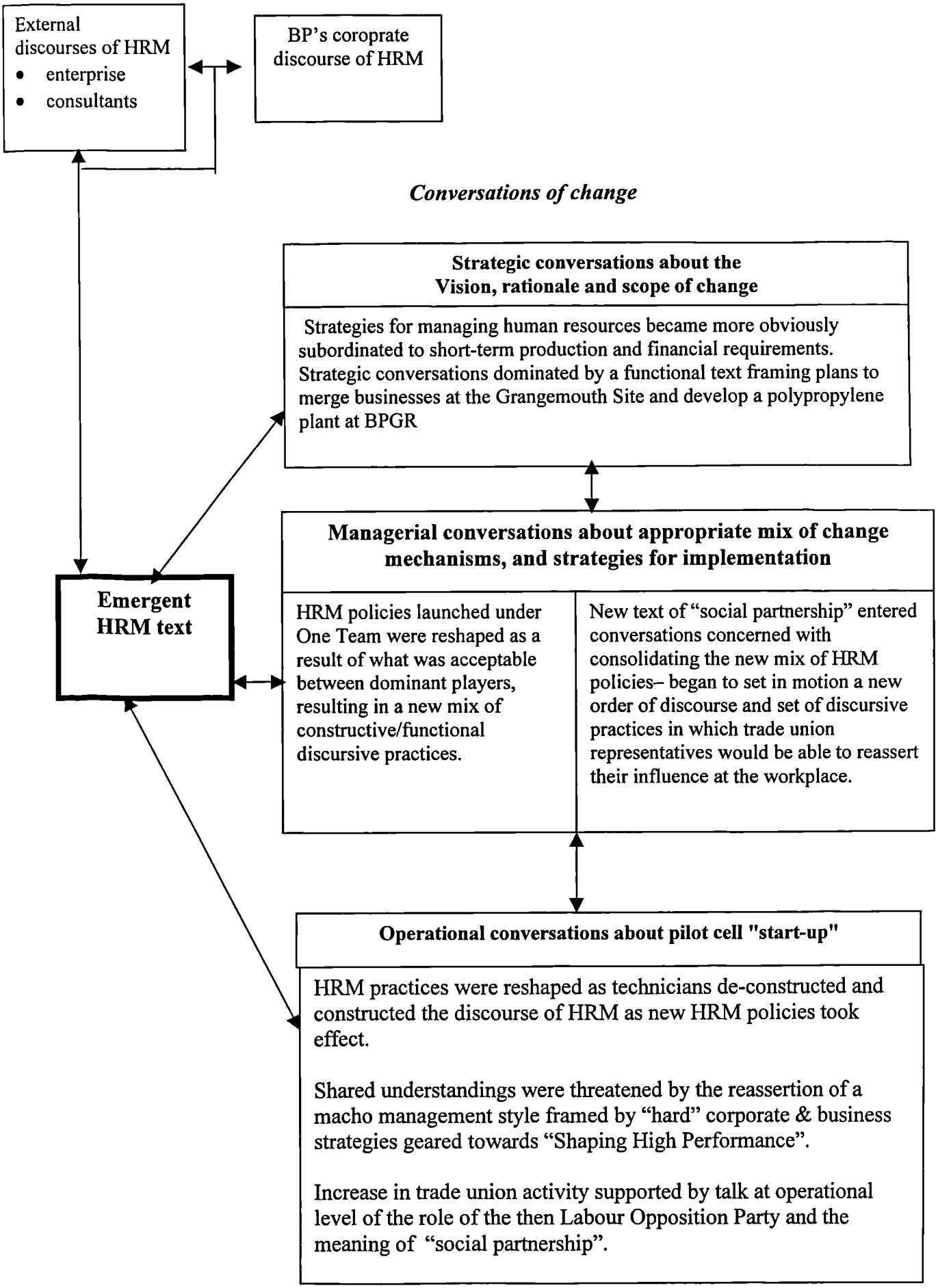
5.4.1 Corporate influence and a changing economic context

The tensions between the "soft" and "hard" strategic choices emerging at corporate level had significant affects upon ongoing processes of discursive change at BPGR. As competition increased and the price of Oil fell, BP Chemicals operating profit dropped to one hundred and twenty million pounds during the second quarter of 1996. This triggered new corporate strategies that sought to achieve the next source of performance improvement for BP by building upon changes in management practice introduced under the auspices of Project 2000.[75] Launched under the slogan "Shaping High Performance" three changes were made in company policy, which sought to create a "new culture of performance, and more freedom and responsibility for staff";

- A simplification of organisational structures
- Integration of activities "where this adds value"
- The creation of "a new dynamism by giving all employees more responsibility and the space to contribute" (BP Chemicals World, April/May 1996).

[75]This was a fall in one hundred and thirty million pounds compared with the second quartile of the previous year, largely attributed to customers building up their stocks and the costs of planned maintenance shutdowns.

Figure 5.6 Phase three of change: incorporation of HRM



Corporate policy changes noted above, reflected a complex mix of both "hard" and "soft" discursive practices that built upon the conflicting mix of push-pull forces upon change at local level illustrated earlier in figure 5.2. "Hard" practices were manifested in the articulation of a new company-wide performance management system and associated integrated performance measures (IPMs) which asserted the primacy of cost control and increased efficiency in managing human resource. IPMs for BP Chemicals (shown in table 5.7) were communicated to all employees with the message that;

> " We will achieve and sustain the next level of performance if all employees are able to relate what they do every day in their jobs to BP Chemicals performance targets. (...) Please check that your objectives and what you do every day in your job support these Integrated Performance Measures both at your location and for BP Chemicals as a whole" (Chief Executive, BP Chemicals).

Table 5.7 Integrated Performance measures[76]

Company	Levers and Measures	
PROFIT	**LEVERS** Volume	**MEASURES** Utilisation & reliability
	Margin	Margin per Tonne
	Productivity	Fixed cost per Tonne Tonnes per person & Margin per person
REPUTATION and teamwork	Employees	Morale index
	Reputation	Customer Satisfaction Index Public Trust Index
CAPITAL and growth	HSE Efficiency	Emissions and Lost Time Accidents Delivery of Net Present Value Working Capital Sales
	Development & Growth	Plant Capability Growth Capital Expenditure/Sales

Within this framework managerial "performance contracts" were carefully adjusted to meet annual and half-yearly reporting schedules. Data indicated that this put pressure on managers to switch resources from one project to another depending on economic

[76] For 1995-96, the following targets measured each business unit manager's performance: "to earn an average of 15% return on capital, after tax with no year worse than 5% to generate cash consistently; to achieve top quartile performance, compared with our competitors". ("Integrated Performance Measures", written by Chief Operating Officer 1995).

exigencies, and partially accounted for the "managerial fatigue" that became manifested during this final phase of the "One Team" change effort at BPGR.

Designs to merge BPGR and BP Oil became a priority for action at the Grangemouth site, together with plans to develop a new Polypropylene plant at BPGR[77]. Thompson explained that these policy decisions threatened the earlier priority given by key supporters of One Team, to the aim of "involvement" and development of HRM practices under the auspices of "Developing People, Developing Performance". Both the HRM and external relations managers had been transferred from the core team, to projects concerned with the merger, and had been replaced by less senior staff from the HRM department. In this background it was difficult for change agents to sustain a shared language of change which demands testing and reinforcement by relatively stable groups of managers over time (Legge 1995b)[78].

In addition to the "hard face" of change at corporate level, the text of change at BPGR was also influenced by "soft " people centred policies announced by corporate managers in the form of a seven-point action plan. Presented in company journals and briefing sessions, the action plan is shown below in table 5.8. Point seven exposes the contradiction between the hard and soft "realities" of HRM as interpreted by senior executives.

Table 5.8 Actions to boost morale (BP Chemicals world, January 1996: 8)

1. be open and honest in all dealings with employees, especially on matters of job security, outsourcing and handling uncertainty
2. guarantee to hold a quality discussion with each one of our direct reports once a year, with a written agreement on actions for the forthcoming year
3. every year give a clear statement of what each employee can expect in terms of career and personal development and who is responsible for action
4. publicise and discuss the "contract" with employees and clearly communicate the development and support processes available.
5. commit to quality "soft time" and include it in performance contracts
6. ensure that upward feedback takes place and use it to measure progress on development issues in the team
7. stop preaching that people are the most important assets and *demonstrate* it.

[77] BPGR was to be the location of a one hundred million pounds Polypropylene plant (Grangemouth News July 1996 :1)

[78] Being seen to be as effective change agent provided a "rite of passage" (Trice and Beyer 1985) for promotion to those involved in the change effort and who were able to "deliver on the One Team".

While earlier successes within BP had been attributed to increases in productivity, reduction in working capital and improvement in plant reliability, concern was expressed at executive level that a sustained competitive advantage could not be gained without an improvement in employee commitment and morale. A company- wide employee attitude survey indicated that ratings for "respect" and "dignity" were thirty percent below industry norms[79] (BP Chemicals World, January 1996), and that a lack of employee commitment was associated with concerns about job security (WGM). At Grangemouth these concerns had been heightened by recent publication of the corporation' s intent to merge the three businesses at the site.

Within this context, the union convenor at BPGR considered that technician consent to the new management regime of One Team centred round the threat of job insecurity and the effects of new assessment procedures on their take home pay, rather than a genuine identification with the company;

> "Folk are gradually starting to fear for their jobs. They fear their assessments, fear all this stuff (points to a pile of company literature)".

This interpretation suggests that instead of a commitment to organisational values, there was evidence of "selective compliance" (Willmott, 1993: 537) or "resigned compliance" (Harris and Ogbonna, 1998: 285) in which the employee calculates a material or symbolic advantage from managing the *appearance* of consent. For example the TGWU convenor talked about employees "buying in to the new culture", and in doing so felt less able to engage in behaviours that may be interpreted as "disloyal" to the company, including active membership of the trade union;

> "At the moment we (the union) are just "ticking over" in that we have several monthly meetings with management about safety issues and things like that. But I can't fill the vacancies I have got with stewards just now, because folk are saying that it's a hindrance to their career because it might have an effect on their assessments. I should have thirty shop stewards, and we are at least ten short".

Under these circumstances the convenor reported that there was an increasing reluctance for employees to assert their rights;

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[79] The index for employee morale was based upon the 1995 company-wide attitude survey.

> "I had a chap who had a claim in against the company, who had fallen off a scaffolding. I got a letter a few weeks ago from the union, saying that he had been advised by his solicitors that this chap had dropped his case against the company. I couldn't understand it because it was a cert. case. So I went to see the chap and asked, what's wrong? He says, "I don't think it is right to be suing the company. We're staff, and I am assessed, and it might affect my assessment".

These comments highlights the "doublethink " of corporate culture controls identified by Willmott: "the simultaneous affirmation and negation of the conditions of autonomy" (1993: 526). In other words, respect for the individual by the employer is equated with conforming to core values and not "rocking the boat".

5.4.2 Translation of corporate policy at local level and the "duality" of HRM

The ambiguity of HRM discourse inherent in corporate decisions examined above was mirrored by the mix of functional and constructive HRM practices launched under the label "Developing People Develop Performance" (page 195). Operational managers were expected to embrace control-centred aspects such as the appraisal of subordinates and allocating pay to individual/team performance. They were also expected to be involved in team briefing, motivation, coaching and counselling of technician teams.

The simultaneous enactment of competing texts had clear implications for those trying to achieve the vision of One Team. On the one hand the constructive rhetoric of HRM had raised the expectations of a growing number of technicians leading to an impatience in achieving more autonomy, more varied and challenging work (core team leader). Employees had been told that if they developed their skills and competencies as shown on technician competency maps (appendix nine) they could rightfully expect re-grading and ultimately some financial gain. The result was active involvement in personal development training sessions that they attended in their own time.[80] On the other hand, implementation of the new performance management system and use of competency matrices exposed technicians to the functional face of empowerment (close measurement of individual attitudes and behaviours) that had been effectively masked by the language of commitment and mutuality.

As technicians who had "bought into" the new discourse became more aware of its ambiguity, management respondents reported "strong employee resistance" to engaging in a vocabulary that would allow their work activity to be transcribed into a highly standardised format. Opposition arose as technicians experienced their first mid-year appraisals and "objected to the overly mechanistic approach to measuring performance" (Manufacturing manager, Olefins). Briefing sessions held between HRM and line managers and the shopfloor, led to round of conversations that focused on the delivery of the new personnel policies. These allowed technicians to enter into a negotiation of meaning with managers in which the role of the individual vis a vis the team was re-defined and the "rules of the game" (Silverman 1970) altered accordingly;

> "I have been involved with managing the process of mid-year appraisals for the first time for these people. The system is not working out as well as it should be working out (...) We had a very numerical system that was very mechanistic and the guys did not like it. The numbers have now gone, been ditched. We are still using grades to measure performance, A B C D E, but removing the numbers i.e. broad bands, and generally speaking people will either be a B or a C. So there is some differentiation there, but such precise categorisations were unnecessary and was less important that a genuine discussion about how you are getting on" (Head of resourcing).

A further example of negotiated social construction arose when technicians effectively resisted a newly devised policy on supplementary pay by refusing to take phone calls from their employer while off duty at home. It resulted in a further round of operational conversations in which alterations were made to the new pay policy, and which represented the kind of teamworking preferred by technicians;

> "We have had a lot of problems getting people to come out on extra shifts. The new system generated an answer phone culture, people did not make themselves available (...) So we are now going to introduce something that is team based. We have ditched the system where each technician is allocated eighty hours overtime paid at the flat rate. Instead we have said that we are prepared to view them as a team of ten people, and pay the team 800 hours (...). It is team based, teams now decide who is available and who isn't" (HRM manager, resourcing).

These examples illustrate the "duality" of HRM and that although managers may have the advantage of being able to control much of the production of HRM text this will

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[80] Training specialists reported that one third of the technician population attended a first round of half-day workshops, and most of the remainder attended courses held later..

always be subject to contested interpretation. The power of dominant groups to generate a shared language in the long term was constrained by the inherent instability of HRM discourse, allowing subordinates to carve out spheres of "interpretative autonomy" and challenge univocal definitions offered by management (Bryman 1999).

The dynamic of this upward influence became increasingly evident to dominant players as they attempted to translate espoused policy into practice and found that the management of change was far from problem free in this new "union free " environment. For example, the HRM adviser responsible for co-ordinating review procedures reported that a key lesson learnt from managing recent pay and grading issues was;

> (...) you need to listen to people and to compromise, not just work off a management agenda. It's about sharing ideas".

5.4.3 Wider changes in the socio-political environment

A second set of issues external to the firm which influenced the state of play between constructive and functional texts at BPGR and the inclusion and exclusion of different stakeholder groups, was associated with changes in Party politics. Interviews with the union convenor suggested that senior management preparedness to include employees and their representatives in conversations of change was influenced by the emergence of the discourse of "social partnership" framing the election manifesto of the then opposition Labour Party. The concept of "partnership" allowed greater room for the expression of a wider range of interests than just managers, reflected in a promise made in the Party's manifesto to establish statutory union recognition and representation rights whenever a majority of the relevant workforce voted for it. If this change were enacted at BPGR, the employer would be legally obliged to reinstate collective bargaining provisions at the plant (IRS Employment Trends, 1997b).

Consistent with the views expressed by the union convenor, the core team leader voiced concerns about the likelihood of the election of a new Labour government next spring, and the implications this might have upon employee commitment to a discourse which emphasised mutuality and consensus;

> "It is critical that we make sure that our new forms of employee involvement work. We cannot afford to be complacent given the possible threat of a return of a labour government".

These circumstances altered the perceived balance of power between managers and shopfloor workers, leading to the reassertion of collectivist values amongst the latter. This was indicative of the old engineering discourse that gave primacy to negotiation over the effort-reward bargain;

> "A lot of people, who joined the factory since One Team, had not joined a union. We no longer had the same access to these new starts – any new starts used to have a 30 min chat with the union, but this no longer happens. Now they have *all* joined the union! (density now 100%) The union is going from strength to strength with Fairness at Work coming in, and soon we will be back to collective bargaining" (Convenor).

> "A lot of people, who never dreamed of joining a union, are now doing so. This is also related to the number of job losses expected as we hear about more departments being outsourced and so on. This was announced on the same day that I attended a day's training course for team leaders during which we were told that people were BP's "most valued asset"! (Team leader).

The final comment presented above, reflected growing tensions between competing texts of change. On one hand a constructive text framing the new HRM policy mix and recent training workshops aimed to foster consensuality and participation. On the other, the actions of many line managers operated largely in terms of a functional text that emphasised the control of costs and effective utilisation of labour. As a result technician team autonomy and career opportunities remained heavily circumscribed;

> "We got told that there were no barriers. There is nothing in your way, and there is a map there that shows you how to go right through to the top!" (Production Team leader).

> "This was management propaganda. The reality people have found to be different (...) So, the whole idea of One Team is nonsense, the differentials will always be there" (TGWU convenor) [81].

While one manufacturing team leader cited examples of more participative management styles and a "team spirit" within the KG area in which he worked, the pace of change

[81] Talked of disillusionment amongst "all the young stars" within the fire department who had reached the top of their "competency map" and whose claims for re-grading had been turned down by management.

was felt overall to be slow, and characterised by the continuance of a macho management style. Consistent with this view were comments made at focus group interviews with production workers and team leaders which indicated that although ex-FLMs were now "off shift" and had joined the ranks of engineer, they continued to be referred to as the "boss" who "tells us what to do";

> "He is still the one that will come in and change the daily combination and say, no do that now!"

Under these circumstances technicians reported the continuance of "us and them" attitudes and behaviours at the workplace indicative of the old engineering discourse, and the disillusionment felt amongst the younger technicians whose expectations had been raised by the new text of HRM;

> "Our authority is getting greater but is still limited (...) There are still a lot of things going on that we know nothing about. Communications are as bad as ever"

> "I think one of the problems with communications is that there is still a "them and us". They will pass you in the corridor and will not pass the time of day with you"

Promotion prospects were now seen to be very limited and those technicians interviewed no longer saw management claims that technicians could break through the "glass ceiling" to be realistic. During follow up interviews held twelve months after the close of the substantive part of fieldwork, management were also accused of breaking their promises about job prospects for shopfloor workers. The fragile "interest space" (Collins 1999) created during phase two of change diminished as workers perceived limited opportunities for advancement and job security, under a management regime which was becoming more overtly concerned with values of cost control triggered by continuing competitive pressures within the industry. This was reflected in a large number of job losses within the company announced in the winter of 1998, following a fall in oil prices and operating profits within the BP group (Telegraph, 11 February 1999: 39)[82]. It was under these circumstances that introduction of the concept of "social partnership" at BPGR brought traditional discourses and the newly introduced HRM discourse into a new mix setting in motion a fresh set of meanings and discursive

[82] BP announced cutbacks of four hundred jobs within the chemicals plant at Grangemouth, and a further 120 reductions in the associated refinery.

practices. The convenor expressed high expectation of the reinstatement of collective bargaining within the plant but of a kind that would be different than in the past. He explained that the launch of the White Paper "Fairness at Work", had generated much "talk of social partnership" amongst his members and had led to a series of meetings being scheduled between shop stewards and senior managers about the establishment of new forums for employee involvement and participation. This signalled the ongoing nature of organisational change generally and in particular, fresh rounds of negotiated social construction in which union representatives were more likely to re-assert their influence.

5.5 Conclusion

The BP case study presents a rich insight into the fluid and multi-faceted nature of HRM, shown to be dependent upon the continuing reshaping of cognitions and power-related activities embedded in conversations of change. Similar to the Ethicon case, analysis has shown that HRM cannot be collapsed into hard or soft practices, but is a complex mix of the two.

Like the Ethicon case, a summary of key findings, presented below, are structured round the following three themes:

- the fluidity of HRM (HRM as process)
- the role of HRM in the structuring of meaning
- the relationship between context and processes by which meanings become shared and/or fragmented.

5.5.1 HRM as process

Case study evidence has revealed the enabling and constraining features of HRM discourse as leaders sought to effect strategic change. Importantly, organisational participants did not merely react to or negotiate within a given discourse but were actively involved in its production and reproduction at strategic, managerial and operational levels of conversation. At a strategic level, data discloses ways in which the WGM was able to draw upon external discourses in a creative fashion in order to shape

the emergent text and discursive practices at the plant. While constrained by the prevailing order of discourse at BPGR that favoured pluralist employment practices, Brown was also able to alter it by introducing an HRM discourse that helped create a mix of old and new text types that engendered an alternative "world view" of the organisation. Like the Ethicon case these have been referred to as "functional" and "constructive" text types, recognising that each is particular to the organisational setting in which it is enacted.

Analysis of the contradictions between these texts is shown to be pivotal to the development of an understanding of discursive change. Conversations of change were characterised by constant struggle between the use of constructive and functional discursive practices as managers grappled with economic and humanist concerns inherent in managing employment relations. At the heart of these sensemaking activities was the tension between processes of discursive closure as change leaders sought to structure understandings and expectations of change, and proliferation of definitions as subordinate groups began to make their own meanings and interpretations of HRM. Key features of this dynamic are presented below.

5.5.2 The role of HRM in the structuring of meaning

An examination of change management processes has demonstrated the significance of HRM discourse as a medium through which senior managers reconstructed images of the organisation and created "set overlaps" that led to acceptance amongst subordinates of individual contracts and the creation of SDTs.

Data revealed that the dominant "world view" created during the initial phase of change could not be sufficiently contested by competing subgroups on the shopfloor until younger organisation participants gained concrete experience of change. During the launch of "One Team", contested definitions amongst industrial staff were subverted through appeals to workers' financial interests and by a sophisticated communications strategy that placed a tight control on the production of HRM text and its meaning. Text production was characterised by the use of new metaphors used to obfuscate tensions between competing discursive practices that on the one hand centred on the objective of

"involvement", and on the other were concerned with maintaining managerial control and the "bottom line". The metaphors of "team", "single status" and "market", provided convenient discursive devices used to combine functional and constructive texts framing strategies for change. For example in one sense the word " team" engendered a unitary view of the firm and opportunities for personal growth and development. In another competing sense, "team" created an image of a multi-skilled work group that could be utilised in order to "add value" to the business and help it become a "world class manufacturer ". The ambiguity of such figurative language provided an important means of masking the "hard" characteristics of change associated with the potential loss of supervising posts and bargaining rights. From the perspective of the union convenor, unions at the plant did not have the resources to challenge the univocal position presented by the senior team and launched under the banner of "One Team". It meant that competing "voices" amongst some of the longer serving employees and union representatives were effectively muted, leading to a majority vote in favour of individual contracts and destruction of procedures for collective bargaining.

In a similar vein, discussion of the second phase of change showed HRM as an important discursive resource used by change agents to manage meaning and create a new organisational "reality". This was evident in the development of a series of formal communications that built upon promises made during the harmonisation phase. Text produced under the rubric of "Developing People, Raising Performance" drew upon new and more creative ways to manage the ambiguity of HRM. Like the concept of "team" the term "competence" was introduced in such a way as to skilfully integrate function and constructive texts. On the one hand competence referred to the development of skills and responsible autonomy. On the other, it focused on close measurement of individual attitudes and behaviours. There was evidence that attempts to structure understandings in this way were partially successful, reflected in a shared belief amongst some of the younger serving technicians that they could "shoot for the stars". The result was a ready acceptance to attend personal development sessions in their own time, and a greater preparedness to attend formal training courses (for example computer training in the use of e-mail and spreadsheets).

5.5.3 The relationship between context and processes by which meanings become shared and/or fragmented.

The BP case has demonstrated that the extent to which shared understandings of the kind noted above could be sustained over the longer term was influenced by a complex web of social structures internal and external to the firm.

Those external structures that emerged as being central to the emergence of HRM, included discourses emerging from a shifting "sector recipe" within the oil and chemicals industry and wider socio-political changes embedded in talk of the "enterprise culture." These discourses encapsulated a new form of mythopoetic-talk (Marshak, 1998) that provided implicit legitimacy and coherence to the rhetoric of HRM emerging within BP, reflected in the Group's "Project 2000". A central plank of the programme was the development of a discourse of HRM which provided senior executives with scope for exercising power over the creation of shared meanings across different levels within the organisation.

It was noted earlier that this discourse was not imposed on local managers in a deterministic way. Rather, data shows how the senior team at BPGR enacted HRM and ways in which the language was constructed and reconstructed within the local social, political and cultural worlds in which it emerged. Moreover it highlights a dialectical relationship between decision-making structures at corporate and business levels made explicit in the nomination of local "manufacturing champions" that allowed for "bottom-up" as well as "top-down" influences upon the development of "best practice" within the company. Appointed as "manufacturing champion" for the BP chemicals division, the works general manager at BPGR had considerable power to make his own meaning of HRM within the particular constraints imposed by structures at corporate and local level. Aspects of structure local to BPGR that were of particular significance, included different sources of power play such as formal authority, interpersonal alliances and coalitions, control of scarce resources and control over the production and interpretation of organisational text.

The WGM's formal authority to define the stage of action at BPGR was bolstered by his position as manufacturing champion and considerable financial resources made

available to him from the parent organisation. BP chemicals enjoyed a growth product market and high profit levels at that time, placing high economic leverage to effecting an agenda for culture change at the plant. It allowed the WGM to invest time and resources in the development of sophisticated communication programmes which drew upon the language of HRM described earlier, in order to challenge attitudes and behaviours institutionalised within union recognition and collective bargaining structures. It meant that while the WGM felt constrained by political relations embedded in a "strong trade union mentality within the plant", he also felt able to shape these by exerting considerable control over the production, consumption and interpretation of organisational " text".

As the change effort entered into its second phase characterised by the testing out of new ideas and the development of implementation strategies, subordinates were more likely to challenge the dominant view of the organisation created by change leaders. Data showed that the ambivalence of HRM discourse allowed the former to carve out spheres of "interpretive autonomy" (Bryman 1999) enabling them to reconstruct and challenge the ideology of "One Team" as defined by management. As technicians experienced "quick wins" they actively engaged in the new discourse of HRM, and in doing so negotiated meanings of the concepts of "empowerment" and "self managing teams" with line managers, thereby constructing and reconstructing the language of HRM. Further evidence of upward influence upon conversations of change was demonstrated in the active engagement of technicians in the language of personal development and performance appraisal, and subsequent re-negotiation of shared meanings with managers that led to changes in the "rules of the game".

As the change programmes entered its final "phase", it became more difficult for change agents to negotiate or sustain a common language and shared image of the organisation created under the auspices of One Team, or to achieve a workable consensus amongst multiple stakeholder groups. As change progressed there emerged a proliferation of competing "realities" that reflected significant differences of interests inherent within organisational hierarchy and the specialisation of labour. The constructive text of HRM had raised expectations amongst a growing number of technicians and led to a "push

from below" for more autonomy which was meeting with frequent resistance from the ranks of ex-FLM's and engineer. While managers within these ranks had eschewed the old language of negotiation and compromise, they remained attached to the traditional "command and control" style of management, reinforced by the emergent functional text concerned with the effective utilisation of labour. There was little evidence of acceptance of the soft rhetoric of HRM aimed at supporting the development of SDTs, yet these groups were expected by the senior team to play a pivotal role in translating such rhetoric into practice.

Strategies for change had been based on the assumption that the attitudes and behaviours of operational managers could be altered primarily through a change in organisational structures and systems, plus skills training in the development of a participative management style. These assumptions underestimated differences in values and interests between senior managers and their juniors, exacerbated by structures for promotion that manifested an endemic short-termism within the organisation, conveyed by shifting priorities for change and subsequent switching of key people onto other projects that assumed a higher profile.

Struggles of interpretation between competing interest groups were meshed in tensions between "hard" and "soft" strategic choices about the management of human resources at corporate level, which in turn influenced processes of negotiated social construction between managers and subordinates at BPGR as HRM policies were put into practice. Consistent with arguments presented by Ahlstrand and Purcell (1988), and Purcell and Ahlstrand (1994), HRM decisions at plant level were inextricably linked to corporate structures and vice versa, leading to the conclusion that any theoretical framework of HRM must take account of a multi-level analysis of social structures internal and external to the firm. As regards the latter, at the close of fieldwork, changes in Party politics spawned the emergence of the language of "social partnership" introduced by the then Labour opposition party that challenged the individualistic values upon which the lexicon of "enterprise" was based. The concept of social partnership and political promises of increased trade union influence at the workplace presented new opportunities for upward influence at the plant, leading to perceptions held amongst

change agents and recipients of change, of a shift in the balance of power between managers and subordinates.

5.6 Summary

To conclude, findings from the BP case study show that strategies for HRM-based change were not single choice decisions as depicted by normative prescriptions of HRM. Managers and their subordinates engaged in a continuous reshaping of cognitions and decisions about human resource issues as change strategies were implemented and outcomes began to emerge. These processes were both shaped and shaped by the discourse of HRM which in itself has shown to be both a reflection of and a constitutive element of changing social structures internal and external to the firm.

These findings support key arguments underlying this present study about the role of HRM discourse in processes of organisational change, and how intertextual relations were both an expression and outcome of conversations of change. Tracing the shifting dominance of one text type over the other as change unfolded reflected continuous power struggles amongst the ranks of managers and their subordinates, and highlighted the plurality of managerial life as well as the role of upward influence upon the text of change. An examination of this dynamic also disclosed the cyclical nature of change as new concepts were produced and reproduced (i.e. "social partnership") creating a new mix of old and new text types and fresh impetus for organisational change.

6 Chapter Six: A Processual framework of HRM

6.1 Position of research findings within the current debate in HRM

It was noted in chapter two that a functionalist approach continues to dominate mainstream research within the HRM and change literatures. From this perspective, the logic of "bundling" has generated a growing number of surveys designed to derive taxonomies of HRM strategies and practices that are linked to high organisational performance (for example, Arthur, 1994; Huselid, 1995; Guest, 1997; Guest and Hoque, 1994; Patterson, 1997; Wood and de Menzies, 1998).

At issue is whether those organisations which adopt a particular mix of high commitment practices perform better than others, with little or no attention given to the processes by which such bundles emerge and alter in shape and form over time. This thesis challenges the theoretical analysis of HRM underpinning research of this kind. An alternate conceptual framework is presented in section 4.2 that allows analysts to reflect further on the "bundles" debate. It provides a more critical analysis of the role of HRM in organisational change, especially management processes concerned with its introduction and deployment as part of a planned change effort. The framework is underpinned by the assumptions that organisational members actively enact the reality that they inhabit, and that language is a critical medium in this process of social construction. This view contrasts with conventional accounts that offer an implicit theory of process which is rational in character, treats HRM has having a concrete or pre-given existence and its "hard" and "soft" dimensions as being mutually incompatible (Storey, 1992; Guest, 1987; Wood, 1995; Wood and de Menzies, 1998).

Interpretive research designs centred on discourse analysis have greater potential to unravel this paradoxical nature of management, or what Merton and Barber call "sociological ambivalence" (Merton and Barber, 1963, cited by Watson, 1977: 63). This ambivalence is exemplified in Watson's interpretive accounts of ways in which managers engage in negotiating internal struggles between "control" and "HRM" discourses (Watson, 1994, 1995a,b), each reflecting alternative conceptions of organisational "reality". Little is said however about the ways in which organisational

participants engage within the same discourse and wrestle with and reconstruct the meaning of linguistic constructs that signify that discourse. HRM discourse described in the form of "empowerment, skills and growth" is treated as being mutually exclusive to the "control, jobs and costs discourse", albeit managers are said to have often engaged in an "odd mixture of the two".

This present study builds upon inquiry into the discursive nature of organisation and the special role of HRM discourse as a vehicle in the development of a common language of change. HRM in this sense has been viewed as a root metaphor (Dunn, 1990; Grant, 1996) allowing for the phenomenon to be treated as something that is enacted, given meaning and constituted through discursive activity.

Rather than serving as simply a tool representing and transmitting an external "reality" suggested by conventional approaches to HRM, the discourse of HRM is seen to be constituted and reconstituted as a consequence of complex social relations and practices depicted metaphorically as "conversations" of change. Importantly, recognition is given to the interplay between "conversations" emerging from "top" to "bottom" eschewing the dichotomization in much of the prescriptive literature in which change strategies and mechanisms are characterised as either "bottom up" *or* "top down" and "hard" *or* "soft".

It was noted in chapter two that much of the change literature has emphasised top-down "indoctrinative" approaches, in which change is planned and orchestrated by the senior team but which allows for staff involvement and collaboration in order to build their commitment, and to encourage a "learning environment" (Storey, 1995; Guest, 1987; Bate, 1994; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Kanter, 1983, 1989). More recently, proponents of emergent change favour "bottom up" approaches in which senior management have far less overt control over the process and the target of change is at the periphery rather than the centre of the organisation. Some analysts within this broad field of research have adopted a processual interpretive perspective (for example Pettigrew and Whipp, 1993; Dawson, 1994), others advocate a more rational task-aligned approach in which "what has to be done governs who works with whom, and who leads" (McHugh et al., 1999: 558; Butcher and Atkinson, 1999; Beer et al., 1990; Hunter and Beaumont, 1993). While much of this literature tends to treat emergent and

planned approaches to change as mutually exclusive, in practice organisations are likely to display a complex blend of interdependent "top-down" "bottom-up" change management styles and mechanisms which display a mix of rational-analytic techniques and those that are more culturally sensitive.

Echoing this view Burnes and others (Burnes, 1996; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Stace and Dunphy, 1994) argue that organisations require to use a combination of planned and emergent approaches to strategy development and change management, described by Buchanan and Boddy as "content", "control" and "process" agendas. The content agenda is concerned with the technical competence of the change agent with respect to the substance of the changes taking place. The control agenda is concerned with conventional project management techniques (i.e. problem solving, planning and budgeting skills). The process agenda is concerned with gaining commitment through the use of team building, negotiation, communication and consultation skills, and the management of meaning (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992).

While case study research is presented that provides some insight into ways these "logics" are played out, the processes by which HRM discourse is constructed and reconstructed in its situated context remains inadequately explored within the specialist literature on HRM. Pettigrew and Whipp acknowledge that the "blind spot in such work has been its superficial resolution of the problems of how such new practices and standards are created, introduced and sustained" (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991: 203). Concerned with the role of HRM in organisational change they produce a processual framework that relates the ability to transform HRM practices to managing strategic change in order to achieve competitive advantage. Emphasis is placed on developing "organisational capability" for change that rests on the ability for managers to create a "learning environment". Five key factors that influence this learning process are shown in figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Managing Change for Competitive Success (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991)

Environmental assessment: research showed that "it was not enough for firms to regard judgements of their external competitive world as only a technical procedure (...) the requirement is for organisations to become open learning systems (page 105)

Leading change: the authors point out that the main conclusion with regard to leading change is that no universal rules apply. Nevertheless, they stress the importance of context and state that "nowhere among the five central factors is the set of primary conditioning features so important. Moving directly to bold actions is costly" (page 281) These conditions include 1, Building a receptive climate within the organisation. 2, building capability to mount change. 3, establishing a vision and direction of change (change agenda) which is incremental in process.

Linking strategic and operational change: this linking process is regarded as important because on the intentional and emergent nature of change. The need is therefore to "appreciate how intentions are implemented - and hence transformed - over time" (page 281)

Human resources as assets and liabilities: HRM is said to relate to the "total set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that firms need to compete". To achieve this requires a long- term learning process, of which the first step is to raise the importance and role of HRM in relation to the business needs of the firm. Thereafter "the mechanisms for confirming and stabilising such initiatives are less programmatic than ad hoc".

Coherence in the management of change: this describes the most abstract of the five factors highlighted by Pettigrew and Whipp's research: "the ability to hold the business together as a totality while simultaneously changing it often over lengthy periods of time" (page 283).

An examination of these five process dimensions reveals a range of conceptual process skills necessary to manage strategic change, including an understanding of the contribution of HRM to business success, sensitivity to the changing organisational context and skills to mobilise political and cultural systems. Central to this analysis is a concern with visionary leadership and the management of meaning noted in an earlier discussion of Pettigrew's work (1985) at ICI (chapter two).

The results of this present study go beyond Pettigrew's analysis of "meaning" in one major respect: they provide a more critical analysis of the ambiguity and fluidity of HRM that is not made clear in his discussions of the role and development of HRM practices (Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Hendry and Pettigrew 1990a,b). While he acknowledges the role of HRM in the shaping of organisational culture, he fails to address its multiple meanings nor how its links to the outer organisational context may be traced to the emergence and development of different discourses within

the organisation. These issues are of central concern to the theoretical framework developed in the next section. Here understanding of the ambiguity and fluidity of HRM is shown to be pivotal to developing knowledge of management processes concerned with the emergence and deployment of HRM practices. An interpretive lens is presented that allows for more careful examination of ways in which the ambivalence potential of HRM presents sources of tension around which *all* actors involved (not simply change leaders) have some ability to manage meanings and thus shape the events and outcomes of HRM-based change.

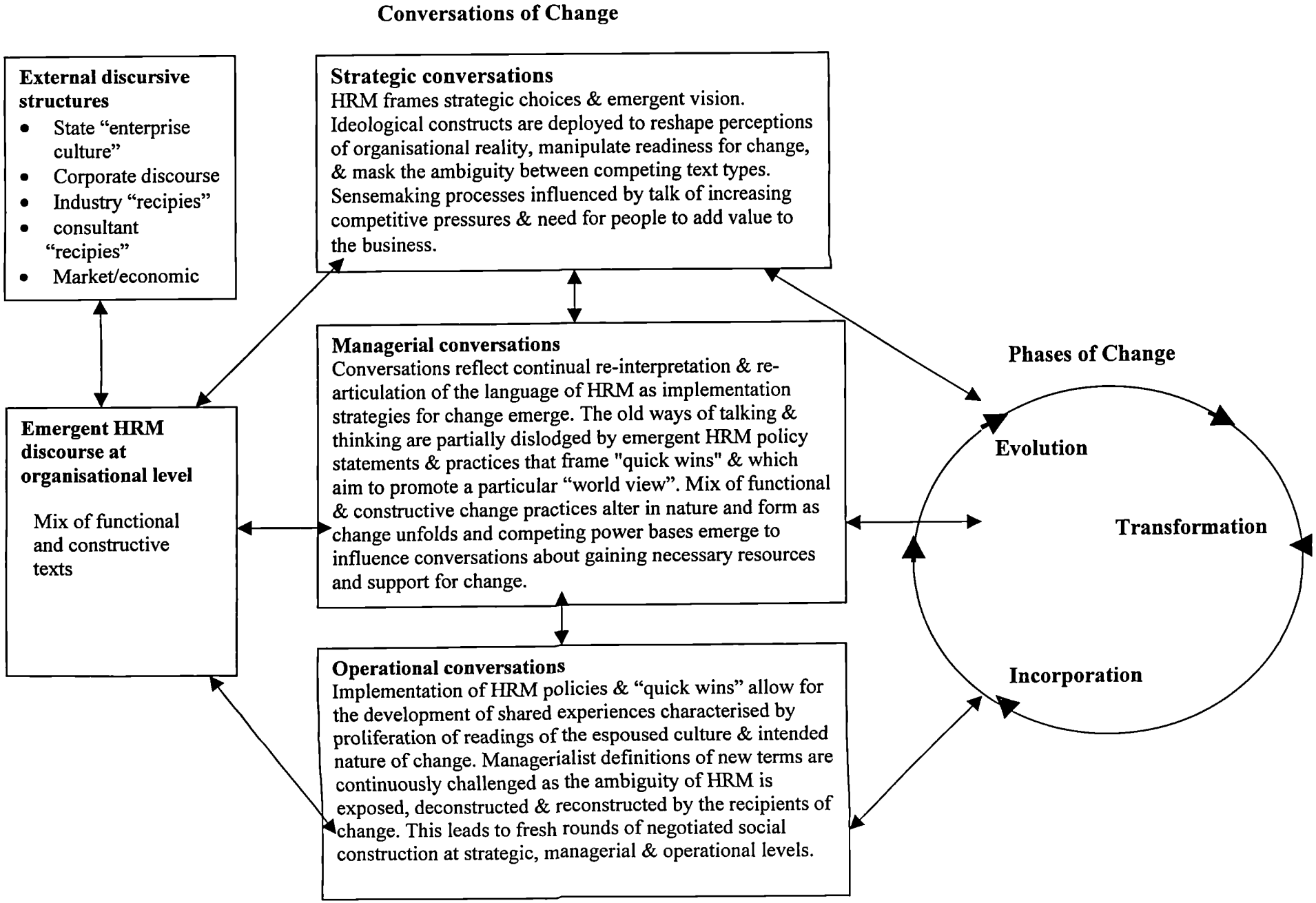
6.2 A Processual framework of HRM-based Change

As indicated in the introduction to the thesis, the contribution of this present study has been to develop a processual framework of the role of HRM in organisational change, presented in figure 6.2. Consistent with the research objectives reiterated below, the framework is sensitive to the dynamic social, cultural and political processes through and within which HRM discourse and associated mix of practices are mobilised by organisational participants.

Objectives of the research

1. Explore management processes concerned with the emergence and deployment of HRM as part of a planned change effort, in particular how and why certain interpretations and configurations of HRM activities emerge and alter over time.
2. Examine the nature and scope of change and its associated phases.
3. Examine the constant movement of meaning as managers endeavour to effect strategic change, and the dialectical relationship between this dynamic and existing social structures internal and external to the firm.

Figure 6.2 Dynamics of HRM-based change at the level of the firm



Similar to earlier processual analyses, organisational change is not treated as a linear movement but an iterative process that comprises spiral patterns of discursive change and restructuring of collective meanings (Ford and Ford, 1995; Doz and Prahalad, 1988; Dawson, 1994). "Phases" of change are thus outlined in the form of a circle to emphasise their fluidity, and summarised on page 224. Mediated by discursive structures internal and external to the firm, these phases represent time frames within which change unfolded, and are shown to be rooted in a hierarchy of mutually dependent "conversations" in which HRM is enacted. This dynamic is captured at strategic, managerial and operational levels of managerial work concerned with the development of a shared vision for change, design choices (including preferred mix of HRM practices), "delivery" of implementation strategies and day-to-day management of change.

HRM is depicted simultaneously as a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice and an instance of social practice in the form of recruitment and selection, reward and so on. Shown in the form of "mixed intertextuality" (Fairclough, 1992) functional and constructive texts and practices of HRM are merged in a more complex and less easily separable way than that portrayed by normative models of HRM. Rather than being viewed as two separate entities these texts are treated as *mutually dependent* and relations between the two shown to be embedded in immediate and wider social structures (for example government policy and language of enterprise, corporate discourse, struggles between "buyers and sellers" of labour).

In this sense language is not a neutral vehicle for communicating pre-existing "facts" about organisational change, but an ongoing process of social construction in which the relationship between opposing terms is one of mutual definition. Legge (1995b) and Hassard and Parker (1998) apply Derrida's concept of deconstruction to explain linkages between opposing terms. Derrida assumes that texts are structured round polar opposites (eg. good-bad, male-female, formal-informal) but that the relationship between them is one of mutual dependence in which each term "inhabits" the other (Hassard and Parker, 1998: 11). Oppositional constructs evident within the HRM literature include "loose-tight", core-periphery workforce" and "hard-soft", and as

Keenoy observes; "Ontologically, what is significant about such relational constructs is that each component implies the actual, necessary or potential presence of its opposite and there is a clear indication that the 'same facticity' may 'take shape' in a variety of forms *at the same time*"(Keenoy, 1999: 13).

The mutual dependence between "hard" and "soft" aspects of HRM is well represented by the two competing text types evident in the Ethicon and BP cases. Illustrated in 6.1, these texts reflected alternate management assumptions and beliefs about the employment relationship and are broadly similar to the kind of "control" and "commitment" discourses identified by Walton (1985) and Watson (1994). Together they signified the new root metaphor of HRM defined by Dunn (1990) and were characterised by HRM practices broadly similar to the "bundles" noted in chapter two.

The functional text focused on the development of new working practices and personnel policies that could improve employee and organisational efficiency. It was based on an implicit metaphor of "organisation as machine" that elevates the importance of the rational and structural dimensions and underplays the human aspects of organisation (Morgan, 1997: 5). This was represented in the two case studies by "hard" rational-analytic approaches to change concerned with changing structures and behaviours in order to improve the "bottom line".

In contrast, the constructive text focused on developing opportunities for employee development, empowerment and creation of more varied and interesting jobs. It was based on an implicit metaphor of "organisation as culture"(Morgan, 1997: 120), represented by "soft" cultural approaches to change concerned with creating norms and meanings that were congruent with "organisational" interests. A key organising theme associated with this text was the team metaphor built around the assumption of unconditional co-operation and harmony between workers and management.

Table 6.1 Intertextuality of HRM

Functional Text Type ⟵	⟶ *Constructive Text Type*
• Concerned with notions of rationality and efficiency and a mechanistic approach to management • People are just another factor of production- emphasis on production output, avoidance of negative variances and improving the "bottom line". • Human resource issues centre on ensuring the right number of people and skills at the lowest price • Cultural diversity is ignored or played down • Underpinned by Theory X attitudes and assumptions ; employees are passive • Transformational change focuses on change in structures and systems • Monitoring procedures focus on tangible goals and objectives achievable in the shorter term	• Concerned with notions of values, norms and shared meaning and the development of employee commitment • Treats employees as valued assets and an important source of competitive advantage • Human resource issues centre on developing trust, collaboration and team atmosphere • Plurality of interests are recognised, but emphasis is placed on the development of shared meanings and a unitary view of the firm • Underpinned by theory Y attitudes and assumptions; employees are proactive rather than passive • Transformational change focuses on change in attitudes, norms and values over the longer term • "act of faith" that normative prescriptions for change will "work" in the longer term.

Relations or "state of play" between the two texts are depicted in the conceptual framework as both a process *and* outcome of meaning construction and reconstruction, consistent with Cohen and Musson's analysis of the enterprise discourse and how it is reconstructed by individuals working in small businesses (Cohen and Musson, 2000).

This synthesisation of structure and agency contrasts with the functionalist position taken by academics engaging in the "bundles" debate who treat HRM largely in structural terms (Arthur, 1994; Huselid, 1995; Guest, 1997; Patterson, 1997; Wood and de Menzies, 1998). Treating the emergence of HRM as an "active component of structure" (Boden 1994, cited by Musson and Cohen, 2000), allows management processes to be investigated in terms of an evolving mix of competing practices, the boundaries of which are constantly open to being re-drawn in the course of hegemonic struggle. Hegemony in this sense refers to the emergence of a dominant set of inter-textual relations (HRM practices) that create common norms and understandings, and which is open to reproduction, restructuring or challenge depending upon the changing organisational context.

A key strength of the framework is to depict the dynamic, evolving nature of HRM discourse and its capacity to create and stipulate realities of its own as shown in the cases presented in chapters three and four. The cross-case analysis displayed in the next section draws together key findings from the two cases, notably ways in which the metaphors of HRM provide a critical medium through which inter-textual relations can be constructed and reconstructed.

In this sense, metaphor is treated as a process used to create and express meaning by allowing one phenomenon to be understood through another (Morgan, 1996; Marshak, 1996; Grant and Oswick, 1996; Dunford and Palmer, 1996). Importantly, metaphors open up more fluid forms of discourse that allow "hard" and "soft" versions of HRM practice to be compared and understood in terms of the other. They do this by providing special rhetorical frames for viewing the organisational "world" in ways that transcend apparent contradictions and paradoxes (Pondy, 1983). The significance of this dynamic in processes of sensemaking is illustrated below in an outline of the three phases of change evident within the two case organisations (evolution, transformation, incorporation).

Phases of change and the mobilisation of HRM discourse

Phase one: Evolution

In each of the cases, a key executive concerned with developing a revised interpretation of the organisation initiated a planned change effort predicated on using more cost effective and efficient manufacturing processes (i.e. from batch to continuous flow manufacture), the development of shared values and generating employee commitment.

Sensemaking activities were dominated by "strategic conversations" that were framed by a discourse of HRM which challenged the "accepted strategic logic" (Doz and Prahalad, 1988). The language of HRM constituted elements of the prevailing "control" and "welfare" discourses internal to the firm, and external discourses of "excellence" and "enterprise. This mix of text types depended in each case upon the particular orientations and interests of change instigators. Rather than being planted fully formed, the language of HRM provided a range of metaphors and related concepts used as a

discursive resource by the dominant coalition to provide meaning and legitimacy to change strategies. Metaphors such as "team" and "market" provided an important means of integrating competing text types that constituted alternate "world views " of the employment relationship and emergent strategies for culture change (table 6.2).

The two organisations differed in the resources spent on developing an awareness of the need for change during the initial design phase. In BPGR, strategic conversations were characterised by a sophisticated attempt at achieving cultural integration through implementation of a "top down" indoctrinative approach (Bate, 1994) centred round a clearly articulated vision primarily shaped by the WGM. This was followed by "voluntary" acceptance amongst a majority of production staff of new terms and conditions.

At Ethicon, change instigators adopted a more pragmatic approach drawing upon a "fuzzy vision" of change based on the premise that the development of common understandings could be assumed once implementation strategies began to be "rolled out". Planning of implementation strategies was described by the operations director in rational analytic terms in which; "It was assumed that other (people) issues such as bringing support functions into line, teamworking, developing employees, would fall into place". In practice the change programme was delayed because of differences of interests and political rivalries between personnel and line managers as they sought to agree on new policies for recruitment and reward of cell operators. Managerial conversations became an important forum for the negotiation of meanings between change agents. These were guided by management consultants who were central to the production and reproduction of a constructive text used to redefine management plans and create a more positive image of CFM allowing for generation of "voluntary" applications from production workers to transfer from batch to cell working.

In both cases the visioning processes and early planning processes were characterised by a series of power shifts with the organisation that both shaped and were constrained by micro- and macro- discursive structures summarised in the next section.

Phase two: Transformation:

This second phase of change was characterised by the interplay between conversations at managerial and strategic levels concerned with the planning of implementation strategies. In both cases planning processes were dominated by project designs that displayed a rational analytic approach to managing change characterised by a functional text concerned with structural issues and "roll out" charts.

This approach acted as a symbolic device to render an image of a close fit between business and HRM policies, thereby justifying investment in change. Change agents within both cases talked of an "act of faith" in change initiatives, noting the difficulty in articulating change outcomes in objective and measurable terms, but that this was necessary in order to promote the trust and confidence amongst more senior managers who controlled the funding for change. An important influence upon this dynamic was evidence of increasing competition within the health care and chemicals industries and associated changes in corporate strategies that emphasised the need to ensure that HRM strategies could "add value" to the business.

The "myth of procedural rationality" also provided a means of constructing what Brown terms a "rationalizing façade" (Brown, 1994) which may exercise power in an unobtrusive fashion. At BP for example it became an important rhetorical device used to promote the efficacy of issue teams and sanction the creation of a managerially defined vision that framed role descriptions, action plans and progress reports presented by the core team. Within Ethicon, the management report compiled after "piloting" CFM centred on statistics about quantifiable benefits of cellular manufacturing, carefully excluding human resource problems associated with its introduction and difficulties in measuring the effects of teamworking.

Data revealed that the rhetoric of HRM provided an important means of sustaining the power relations created by the kind of political activity noted above. In both cases HRM became a significant discursive resource that allowed for a univocal and positive image of change to be presented by the senior team to recipients, allowing for the development of "set overlaps" (Collins 1998). Shared interests/understandings soon became strained

however as short-term successes were encouraged through the development of "quick wins" or establishment of "pilot cells" that allowed participants to gain concrete experience and create their own interpretations of the language and practice of HRM. This enabled them to exercise upward influence upon conversations of change that during the design stage of change had been dominated by their seniors.

Phase three: Incorporation

Management activity during the final phase focused on consolidating formal organisational policies and procedures allowing for change to become partially "anchored" in new discursive structures and practices. As action plans were implemented and a larger number of employees gained first hand experience of HRM-based change, they were more able to comprehend and deconstruct the new discourse thus exposing its ambiguity.

This led to overt resistance in engaging in a vocabulary that had been largely managerially defined, and a subsequent re-negotiation of meanings and reshaping of HRM policies. Upward influence of this nature was bounded however by formal control over day to day work routines that rested with operational line managers. As change gathered momentum and operators pushed for more autonomy, there was evidence of some re-assertion of traditional supervisory values and behaviours within both of the case studies. This tension provided a catalyst for debate at strategic and managerial levels that would presumably encourage new "initiative conversations" (Ford and Ford, 1995) setting in motion a fresh set of meanings and shifts in the dynamic of HRM discourse, reflecting the constant movement of meaning and fluidity of organisational change.

6.3 Cross-case analysis of the dynamics of HRM-based change

This section undertakes a cross-case analysis that demonstrates the intertextuality of HRM and its significance in processes of sensemaking and organisational change. It is structured round the three themes emerging from the analyses presented in chapters four and five.

Section one addresses the first two themes concerned with the constitutive nature of HRM and the processes by which senior managers sought to control meaning. Section two examines linkages between the construction of HRM and social structures internal and external to the firm, and emphasises the unstable nature of dominating beliefs and values.

6.3.1 HRM as process and its role in the structuring of meaning

Case research presented in chapters three and four displayed HRM as both as an expression and outcome of sensemaking processes and pointed to the critical potential of HRM discourse to mould meaning and create hegemonic power in which certain groups of employees willingly accepted change leaders' view of organisational reality.

The interdiscursivity of HRM was shown to be a central influence upon this dynamic, creating an "ambivalence potential"[83] in which new concepts associated with HRM could be interpreted according to either of the two dominant orientations or a combination of them. This was reflected in different senses made of new metaphors such as "team" and "single status" introduced by change agents as they advanced certain social constructions and social interests over others.

Table 6.2 provides illustrative narratives to show how combinations of metaphors including "market", "single-status" and "teamwork" provided an important means of integrating the two rival texts of HRM. Functional text is reproduced in boldface and constructive text in italics, showing how these were drawn upon by managers to legitimise their plans and activities. The mutual dependence of the two texts highlighted here is consistent with the ontological position of HRM as being a dynamic mix of both "hard" *and* "soft" practices noted earlier. Used in conjunction with the pronouns "our", "we" and "us", this mixing of text types and metaphors helped place responsibility on employees as well as their managers for the future success of the business and functioned to evoke rich and emotional detail that was difficult to question.

Textual analysis revealed that written briefs (from the top team) about the need for change and demands for higher performance were dominated within both of the case organisations, by "ontological" metaphors, that is, ways of viewing organisational events and activities as discrete entities (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:25). At BPGR, for example, change leaders likened the nature of the organisation to that of a "team" signifying a unified culture bound together by a shared ideology concerned with the achievement of "world class manufacturing status".

Similarly participants' understanding of complex economic and market relations was partially restructured in terms of "the competition", "customers" and "the marketplace". This provided a means of referring to the experience of these issues in more tangible ways and acted as a unifying focus to undermine differences in perceptions and interests between capital and labour. The metaphor of team was further elaborated by linking it to the concept of single status and associated word delivery which was emotive and appealing to younger serving employees. Describing the organisation as a "single-status" entity led to talk amongst participants of " breaking glass ceilings" and being "able to shoot for the stars", indicating the powerful appeal of the new rhetoric to its target audience. Creating and defining work experience in this way led to a majority vote in favour of single contracts and new terms and conditions that signified an end to pluralist practices that had dominated employment relations for over forty years. While a significant minority did not share the "reality" created by senior managers, the cessation of collective bargaining destroyed a powerful cultural artefact that was at the heart of the old ways of thinking and working, enabling a more open pursuit of a managerialist agenda.

[83] Following Fairclough (1992: 113) the term "ambivalence potential" is used where a word may be taken to have a combination of two or more senses, in contrast with "ambiguity" where a word may be taken to have one sense or another.

Table 6.2 Use of metaphor and the integration of competing texts

BP Chemicals (Grangemouth)	*Combination of team and market metaphors*		*Single status metaphor and concept of competence as an integrating theme*
	Letter to all industrial staff forwarded prior to launching One Team" " The Site is performing well, but there is little room for complacency. *As we continue* **to make improvements in *our* own performance, so do *our* major competitors, and that is why the continuous improvement theme is so vital** *to us all*" **(...) It is the performance of the people at Grangemouth that will ultimately drive Site performance and deliver the vision of the Site as a world class manufacturing performer.** *It is vital therefore that all of our employees are encouraged and given the opportunity to develop* **and to maximise their contribution to Site performance**	Vision statement "One Team, Benefits You, ***Benefits Your Site"*** **(...) I believe that this next phase in the Site's continuing development is crucial and will be** *of mutual benefit to employees* **and Company alike as *we move*** *together as One Team* **in pursuit of World Class Performance"** **" Through difficult times we have emerged as a key manufacturing centre for the Company and it is vital that we maintain that position as we pursue our vision for the future. (...) The vision is that " we will sustain a reputation as a World Class Manufacturing Performer". This must take account of good and bad times and I believe it can be achieved through the process of continuous improvement** *and the personal development of us all".*	Statements about individual contracts "*The development of the individual without constraint* **will enable us to keep pace with technological advances. In turn this enhances the prospects of capital investment and the long-term future of the Site" (...)** *Technician grades are a means of recognising and rewarding the enhanced role of individuals as they develop these skills and competencies. People are our most valuable asset* and *by developing their skills and competencies we* **will achieve and sustain world class manufacturing.** *Developing People,* ***Raising Performance*****: (...) Competencies are personal characteristics that when demonstrated, contribute to high performance in every job and can be measured and monitored.** *You will be given the opportunity to develop your skills and competencies to help you realise your full potential (...) The benefit to you is that you are encouraged not only to maintain the appropriate competencies to meet the requirements of your current role, but also to develop for future roles".*

Table 6.2 Use of metaphor and the integration of competing texts

Ethicon Ltd	*Combination of team and market metaphors*	
	Espoused rationale for CFM presented in recruitment notices **"CFM is a major company policy, *our survival* depends on it. (...) *Our* customers and *our* competitors are forcing Ethicon Ltd to act swiftly as a *world-class relay team* and to adopt *our* new strategy of cell team working. It is important to know that becoming a member of a Cell is ultimately not a matter of choice; it is a matter of necessity created by *our* Customers' needs, and the need to compete effectively in the marketplace". (Directors Briefing, March 1992: 8)** **"We can guarantee that established Ethicon employees can be sure of a place somewhere within the CFM cell structure,** *provided of course that, as a whole,* **Ethicon Limited continues to satisfy our customers and bring in sufficient orders for the future employment of *us all*".** Excerpt from training manual (CFM Awareness) **"The addition of employee contributions to the business goals of best quality and delivery with lowest manufacturing costs is not just a nod to employee involvement.** *In the CFM production system, employees are given much broader responsibility and authority, are trained in many technical disciplines necessary to the effective exercise of such responsibility and authority,* **and are kept informed on the performance of their operators"**	Espoused objectives of training and development workshops **(...) "Achieve greater understanding of the characteristics of effective teams, examine behaviour which may hinder excellent performance, and set out plans to enhance customer satisfaction** *and employee satisfaction"* (Tie-Line Article, September: 11 1994) (...) *In time, after full training, we visualise cell members being able to make many of their own decisions within the team - how to organise themselves - to plan training events, to help colleagues, and so on. That's what employee empowerment means - just trusting employees to help manage themselves* *Our Human Resource Mission* **To help achieve total customer satisfaction by** *attracting, retaining and developing employees* **with the skills necessary to meet the strategic needs of internal customers,** *within a safe and healthy working environment.* Statement about what production workers could expect on moving into cell work *(..) Will be given an opportunity to enjoy togetherness feeling of being in a close-knit team* *(..) Will given special training in team building, problem solving, how to enjoy putting into practice some of the team's ideas.* *(...) Will be given more variety of work and be trained in other tasks for which you are suited" (Briefing notice to CFM applicants)*

The potential for new linguistic constructs to structure understandings was further revealed once production staff were placed on single contracts. HRM strategies produced at the centre focused on creating a unified language of "competence" which built upon the metaphors of team and single status. Used in conjunction with concepts of the marketplace and "beating the competition", the text of competence placed emphasis upon personal growth and development on the one hand, and on the other a concern with performance management and tight control over individual activities (table 6.2).

This mixing of functional and constructive texts was also evident in rhetoric that sought to create an image of a "single-status organisation". It reinforced an optimism emerging amongst production workers that showed itself in their high attendance at personal development training sessions (run outside normal working hours), and in the words of one manager "an impatience in taking on more responsible and varied jobs".

While change strategies at Ethicon displayed a less sophisticated attempt to target employee attitudes and values, the case also displayed the capacity of HRM metaphors to structure understandings and facilitate acceptance of change. Like BPGR, the organisation was likened to a "team" and opened the way to the creation of a positive view of CFM upon which "voluntary" transfer of operators from batch to cellular manufacturing operations depended. Protests over loss of earnings and limited operator flexibility voiced amongst the first operators to transfer into cells were de-emphasised by a rhetorical language that advanced a unitary image of the plant. Used in conjunction with the pronouns "our" "we" and "us all", the use of "market" as a metaphor provided an important source of both explanation and legitimation for change amongst those operators still working in batch production and expected to apply for vacancies within new cells.

The metaphor was embraced by talk of "market forces" and "increased competition" conveying an image of manufacturing operations as "customer focused". Customers in this sense were characterised as a discreet identifiable entity that was "*forcing*" Ethicon to "act swiftly" in order to survive in "*the* marketplace".

These metaphors provided a critical means of conveying a congruence of interests between management and workers and placing responsibility on employees as well as managers on bringing in "sufficient orders for the future employment of us all". In this context recruitment procedures were designed to create images of more challenging and rewarding work and at the same time emphasised the "necessity (of cell working) created by our Customers' needs, and the need to compete effectively in the marketplace". Training plans were designed on the same principle that "customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction" were mutually dependent. Such messages seemed to have a strong initial impact upon their target audience, reflected in a high number of applications for internal transfer into cells.

These results point to the need to take the "hyperbole" of HRM (Storey 1992) seriously, and challenges accounts of HRM at the level of the firm which dismiss HRM rhetoric as a form of language with little substance (Sisson, 1994; Legge, 1995b).

Combination of plain speaking and rhetoric

Discourse analysis revealed that change leaders drew upon "plain speaking" (Kamoche, 1995a) in addition to the rhetoric noted above, in order to promote a particular view of the organisation (table 6.3). At BPGR for example, having generated emotional attachment to teamworking and single-contracts through the use of metaphor, management presented statements about union de-recognition in "plain" language that offered little room for ambiguity or dissent.

Other examples were found in an analysis of processes for employee involvement as "issue team" members were given specific guidance about the meanings to be attributed to certain terms, including notions of "core technical knowledge" and "additional skills". Role descriptions were also presented in an intentionally objective form that offered little room for debate or disagreement.

At Ethicon recourse to plain speaking was evident in an analysis of the material used in training workshops as shown below, used to prescribe a particular definition of CFM that offered little room for alternate views.

Table 6.3 Examples of plain speaking

BPGR	Ethicon
Statement about the role of trade unions "I would like to stress that " Single Staff Status" is not an exercise aimed at elimination of the Trade Unions. The Unions will continue to have a role to play on your behalf on the Site should you so wish". Harmonisation is often mistakenly referred to as Union de-recognition or perceived as an attack on Trade Union rights. This is not the case (...)	Excerpt from training manual (CFM Awareness) "You will see that the things we are going to be talking about do not depend on being Japanese or making cars. They are simple, straight-forward concepts, many of which originated in Western Europe and America. (...)

The relatively strong initial impact of HRM discourse upon the consciousness of employees and their willingness to accept change within the two cases could be interpreted as socially constructed consent or "false consciousness" (Tinker, 1986, cited by Grant and Oswick, 1996). However the case evidence lends little support to purported "subjugating and totalitarian implications" of excellence/HRM prescriptions, whereby subordinates only see things as dominant players wish them to be seen (Willmott, 1993: 515).

Data examined in the next section, reveals the contradictory and unstable nature of hegemonic relations within the two case organisations and ways in which subordinates engaged in the dominant discourse, but in doing so entered into negotiation of meaning with managers and redefined the "rules of the game". These findings suggest that the kind of managerial prerogative generated by the power effect of HRM, suggested by Willmott (1993) and Knights and Willmott (1987), overstates the permanency of discursive closure and understates the role of "upward influence" in conversations of change (Phillips, 1997).

6.3.2 The relationship between context and processes by which meanings become shared and/or fragmented

This section examines the immediate and wider structures within which HRM-based change emerged and exposes the unpredictable effects of power consistent with the Foucauldian view identified by Hardy and others (Hardy, 1994; Hardy and Clegg, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Knights and McCabe,1999). From this perspective power is

more widely dispersed than the "top-down" or centralised form of managerial control portrayed by normative models of HRM. Consistent with this view, data revealed how power, embedded in organisational discourse, both shaped and was shaped by inter-textual relations of which it was a part, allowing subordinates to influence the meaning construction of their seniors through processes of negotiated social construction. This dynamic was intimately linked to external as well as internal structures providing a case for "contextualist" research that allows for a study of the nexus between processes of change at the level of the firm and wider socio-political change external to the organisation (Pettigrew, 1995).

Upward influence and "reconstitution" of a managerially defined reality

The rhetoric of HRM, notably its rich use of metaphor, did not simply provide a set of linguistic tools used by dominant players to generate shared understandings. While dominant groups were able to create some control over discursive practices, data revealed how participants engaged in the language of HRM and structured their representations of teamworking in its terms, but began to carve out a degree of interpretive autonomy as they gained concrete experience of change. This enabled them to exercise upward influence upon conversations of change that during the design stage of change had been dominated by their seniors.

At BPGR upward influence shaped policies on performance appraisal and out of hours payments, reflecting ways in which the discourse of HRM provided a "tradable currency" (Tyson, 1995) of metaphors and phrases upon which conversations of change could be structured. As technicians who had "bought into" the dominant discourse became more aware of its ambiguity, management respondents talked about experiencing "strong employee resistance" to engaging in new procedures for performance appraisal that would allow their work to be monitored and measured in a more mechanistic fashion. In addition there was the unanticipated consequence of employees turning the language of teamworking and empowerment back on managers as they attempted to operate a new supplementary pay policy.

The creation of an "answer phone culture" effectively resisted management plans to "call out" individual production workers out of hours as and when required on the basis of being paid at the "flat rate". It led to employees reiterating managerial rhetoric about the role and importance of teams, used to "reconstitute" management views about the nature and scope of team governance issues, and was followed by alterations in a policy that one manager defined as "(...) team based, teams now decide who is available and who isn't".

At Ethicon, textual analysis also pointed to the significance of upward influence amongst members of the shopfloor as they questioned a reward system in which they were unable to calculate their individual earnings and expressed their discontent in the "capping of their performance", leading to a fall in output. The result was a reconfiguration of bonus arrangements, turning the constructive text concerned with "attitudes of continuous improvement" into a background issue, and leading to the dominance of a functional text that reinforced an instrumental approach to work described metaphorically by one team leader as "thinking money wise".

Upward influence upon the meaning construction of managers was also evident in participants' accounts of the training process. While a significant number of the more highly skilled (class A) production workers had resisted a group bonus system that supported *the development of a team philosophy, data did reveal a willing acceptance of* an image of teamworking created by personnel specialists/consultants during the recruitment for cells, and later during training workshops. During training sessions attendees were asked to reach consensus about what would make for an "effective cell" and presented their findings to a panel of departmental and senior managers at the end of the course. This inclusion of operators in conversations with senior managers allowed them to challenge core management assumptions underpinning implementation strategies, and in doing so partially "reconstitute" management images of cell working and team governance issues. Data indicated that operators' ability to create their own definitions of an "effective cell" and to act as "sensegivers" within this context, was facilitated by experiences within the plant that highlighted inconsistencies between the "image" of CFM constructed during the start up phase and management practice on the

shopfloor. As these contradictions became evident employees were more able to express new and competing images of "reality", leading to the kind of "hegemonic struggle" described by Fairclough (1992, 1995).

The conceptual framework presented in figure 6.2 illustrates that processes of negotiated social construction of the kind noted above were inextricably linked to a complex mix of discursive structures internal and external to the firm. Two-way arrows between external discourses and the emergent HRM discourse framing conversations of change depict this dialectical relationship.

Aspects of structure local to BPGR and Ethicon that appeared of particular significance included the existence of a variety of overlapping sub-cultures associated with different sources of power play: comprising formal authority, interpersonal alliances and coalitions, control over scarce sources and control over the production and interpretation of organisational text, each of which were inter-linked.

Differences between levels and functions of management were shown to underwrite much of this political activity. Consistent with Watson's ethnographic study (1994), management at Ethicon and BPGR were not a united team sharing common aims and values. There was evidence that supervisors/first line managers did not readily accept the definitions of teamworking or empowerment espoused by the top team.

At the same time data revealed that differences in orientations between personnel and line managers were an important influence upon the dynamics of change and reflected competing text types framing conversations of change. These issues are summarised below.

Role of the operational manager

Operational managers were expected to play a primary role in linking strategic and operational levels of decision-making and conversations of change as implementation strategies were put into effect. They were responsible for encouraging pockets of good

practice within which new values and behaviours could be developed and anchored, but not yet formalised.

At Ethicon establishment of CFM placed supervisors (renamed cell team leaders) in a co-ordinating role over a number of shift groups to whom they were expected to promote responsible autonomy for quality and just-in-time principles. At BPGR, the role of first line manager was to be phased out altogether as FLMs joined the ranks of professional engineers, resulting in considerable change in the role of engineers who became central to the delivery of HRM practices in support of SDTs. This included personal development planning, appraisal, training and development, on-the-job coaching and allocation of individualised pay awards, as well as more "up-front" communication with the shopfloor. These positions were broadly consistent with that of the "business manager" described by Storey (Storey 1992) who assumes a generalist management role which includes the handling of human resource issues.

It was beyond the scope of this present research to undertake an in-depth examination of the changing role of the supervisor/middle manager but the evidence did highlight the pivotal role of this group in translating policy into practice, and problems associated with this. The commitment of cell team leaders and ex-first line managers within the two cases was seen by all senior managers interviewed as having a significant bearing on the successful implementation of change. Yet data revealed that a sense of exclusion from strategic and managerial conversations, inadequate training in competencies required to transfer from "policeman" to "coach" and fears about job security contributed towards a firm resistance amongst this group to language reform and the adoption of a more participative management style.

These findings are consistent with studies that suggest that operational managers are not sufficiently trained or competent to cope with new responsibilities under HRM-based change programmes (Cunningham and Hyman, 1995; Buchanan and Preston, 1991), resist change because of a fear of becoming redundant, losing status or because of competing values (Klein, 1984; Scase and Goffee, 1989; Fenton-O'Creevey and

Nicholson, 1994; Wilkinson et al., and/or a lack of involvement in the initial design of change (Denham et al., 1997; Watson, 1994).

In contrast to these findings, there was some evidence to suggest that newly appointed operational managers displayed more positive attitudes towards employee involvement initiatives than their longer serving colleagues did. Confirming conclusions drawn from Dopson and Stewart (1990) and Thomas and Dunkerley's research (1999), the removal of management layers was seen by some respondents to provide more challenging and fulfilling roles, enabling them to have more control over their working lives. While supporting change however, these respondents expressed frustration at their limited involvement with senior managers about the choice of HRM practices and how they were to be deployed on the shopfloor. Their lack of involvement reflected a unitary view of management that dominated discursive practices within the two cases.

At BPGR it meant that those mechanisms for change targeted at managers primarily aimed at altering their behaviours and performance objectives rather than attitudes and values. This meant placing individuals in jobs with different responsibilities and different relationships with their peers, and two-day training workshops on competencies required of effective team players (FLM's joined the ranks of engineer; process/mechanical and instrument engineers were regrouped into multi-skilled teams and their positions re-named "manufacturing engineer").

Similarly at Ethicon, mechanisms for change at managerial level focused on "hard" structural changes, and became an exercise in what Beer et al. have called "task alignment" - reorganising employee roles, responsibilities and relationships to solve specific business problems (Beer et al., 1993: 101).

An implicit assumption underlying a task-aligned approach is that concepts such as quality, flexibility and teamwork can be defined and measured in an objective and relatively unambiguous fashion. In practice there immediately began to emerge multiple interpretations about the meanings of terms depending upon sub-cultural differences containing occupational, hierarchical, and work experience identifications. For example

there was some evidence that younger serving team leaders within both cases studies were more prepared to adopt and agree in the change effort than longer serving colleagues who identified and were more attached to deeply rooted values associated with that of a "traditional" supervisor. Structural changes did not appear to affect or change deeper levels of awareness and understanding amongst the latter group who continued to be driven by established cultural behaviours and attitudes rather than new ways of understanding and behaviours that senior managers hoped to induce.

Differences between personnel and the line

Consistent with earlier research (for example Legge, 1978, 1995b; Storey, 1992; Watson, 1994) differences were also apparent amongst personnel and engineering/finance functions at middle and senior levels. This was most clearly manifested in the Ethicon case in which line managers remained attached to values and behaviours embedded in traditional cost accounting procedures embedded in the engineering discourse and emergent functional text of HRM. This contrasted with a common consciousness evident amongst personnel managers who favoured a discourse of "soft" HRM that built upon and was consistent with the old "welfare" discourse. Dominance of one text over the other shifted as change unfolded and was characterised by a constant struggle between these different managerial groups.

During the early implementation of change, tensions between the two texts were partially obfuscated by the use of metaphor noted earlier, allowing for the creation of a univocal managerial vision of change and partial alignment of employee and managerial interests. This became difficult to sustain as personnel specialists experienced problems in being able to demonstrate how strategies for employee empowerment could add value to the business in contexts where the functional text remained dominant.

Sustained by a myth of procedural rationality the functional text was further legitimised by increasing competitive pressures that placed cost controls and careful monitoring of performance at a premium within the corporation as illustrated in table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4 External social political and economic influences shaping the evolution of HRM at local level

The emergence of a dominant corporate discourse: Emphasis on strategic fit and the myth of procedural rationality	
Ethicon Ltd	***BP Chemicals (Grangemouth)***
Corporate level statements about the role of HRM and creation of a dominant discourse	
The chairman talked about "speaking the same language all over the world ... Quality" (...) We want to create an environment that allows our people, our most important asset, to contribute to their maximum potential." (1989 Annual Report) (...) It is their intelligence, imagination and dedication that gives us the edge in a tough competitive environment" (1990 Annual Report).	"Teamwork underpins formula for success" (BP Chemicals World June Feb 1992: p4) " Tough decisions are needed now to reach No 1 in target markets" (BP Chemicals World June 1992) " A return to profitability, and with it, BP's traditionally high reputation, will be achieved through successful teamwork" (Annual Report 1992)
myth of procedural rationality	
There remains a lot of uncertainty about what exactly we are going to achieve. Development is softer than some of the harder targets, such as moving the machines around. In a way it is an act of faith (...) You can't simply have an act of faith - because you are running a business. The act of faith has got to be *visibly* taking you somewhere " (CFM manager)	"I think that it is almost an act of faith. To a certain extent it is an act of faith, that through a programme like this you are looking to un-tap the hidden talent that is out there and the contribution that they can make. How you measure that at the end of the day is very difficult. But it needs to be *seen* to part of our overall improvement programme for the site(...)(Core team leader)"
Role of the State and Party politics	
Ethicon Ltd	***BP Chemicals (Grangemouth)***
Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) part-funded a research consortium involving SRI Inc, Ethicon Ltd and Motorola Inc, with the aim of building: "A blueprint of the ideal team of people to work in modular or Cell manufacturing environment" (House Journal, Quality First, December 1992). "Until we applied for "Investors in People", the company strategy and vision etc lived in drawers. Now there is an HR vision and an employee development strategy that pulls things together and forms a basis from which we can develop future cells" (Manager, management development).	"We achieved harmonisation within a very tight time scale. We could have taken longer. But the world doesn't wait anymore, and there were other agendas. Let's be honest, there were political agendas. We were not going to do this with a Labour Government coming in" (Member of core team) "It is critical that we make sure that our new forms of employee involvement work. We cannot afford to be complacent given the possible threat of a return of a labour government" (Member of core team).
Nature of the labour market and perceptions of a decline in trade union power	
Ethicon Ltd	***BP Chemicals (Grangemouth)***
"To be sure of a place in a cell, all employees will have to be ready for compromise (...) If not, our recent advertisement has attracted almost 1,000 external applicants (...) if needs be, we will appoint external candidates, who will naturally be delighted to work in cells with any material" (Recruitment notice)	"There has been a swing away from the union in recent years, and now they have lost bargaining rights at BP Oil. The union seems to have lost its strength. But what everybody seems to forget is that the union is a strong as the people that are in it " (Production operator).

The language of "excellence" emerging at corporate level increasingly called for improved efficiencies in manufacturing processes and reduced lead times, justifying dominance of a utilitarian management regime that placed emphasis on production output at the expense of employee development and autonomy.

The processual analysis of change at BPGR reflected a closer alignment of values between personnel and the line at senior levels, and a more sophisticated attempt at creating a unified culture and developing employee commitment amongst production staff broadly similar to the "high commitment" model presented by Wood (1995).

However data revealed that as "One Team" entered into its third year, people considerations became secondary to short-term production requirements as the firm faced increasing competition and HRM practices became increasingly subjected to the logic of the "bottom line". Like the Ethicon case, the importance of changes in corporate decisions and the wider economic environment was well illustrated as the change programme entered into its final "phase" and a corporate strategy emerged that aimed to reduce costs and improve business performance. These issues are explained in further detail in the following sub-sections.

Corporate discourse and the myth of procedural rationality

Consistent with extant research about the significance of "higher order" strategic decisions (Purcell and Ahlstrand, 1994) corporate discourses had been shown to be an important influence upon discursive activity within the two case studies. The picture to emerge in both companies was a move away from traditional hierarchical control from the centre, to the creation of firms with "loose tight" properties as defined by Peters and Waterman (1982).

It meant that local business units were granted considerable autonomy in running there affairs but that this was circumscribed by the emergence of a corporate discourse and HRM strategies geared towards enhancing the loyalty, commitment, competence and performance of employees. Both corporate discourses mirrored the language of enterprise promoted by the then Thatcher administration, dominated by a new root metaphor of industrial relations offered by HRM that described employment

relationships in more optimistic and unitarist terms. The chairman of J&J for example talked of "speaking the same language all over the world", that was about building new relationships between management and workers which would allow the implementation of important changes in the workplace. Similarly the chairman of the BP group envisaged the breaking down of hierarchical barriers and development of a unitary management style within the company reflected in the slogan "all together better" (Tuckman, 1998: 132).

Rhetoric of the kind illustrated in table 6.4 represented movement towards the use of a variety of practices to cultivate a dominant corporate discourse. These included the use of company-wide attitude surveys, benchmarking, and performance management systems that encouraged business managers to re-conceptualise and redefine work relations at the level of the firm.

While case study evidence outlined the critical influence of corporate discourse upon process of change at this level, this was not shown as unidirectional. Within BP the nomination of local "manufacturing champions" allowed for "bottom-up" as well as "top-down" interpretations to emerge of best practice in people management practices, highlighting an element of negotiation in relations between the corporate centre and its business units. It meant that the WGM at BPGR was able to draw upon elements of local and corporate discourses in a creative fashion in order to create a new mix of discursive practices used to legitimise and explain his own agenda and interpretation of change. Similarly, at Ethicon change leaders had considerable interpretive autonomy that allowed them to construct their own meanings of HRM according to local needs and interests.

While there were significant differences in the ways in which change leaders enacted HRM, in both cases these processes were influenced by the portrayal at corporate level of HRM-based change as offering a "salvation" from increasing competitive pressures facing the corporation, consistent with observations made by Dunn (1990) and Grant (1996) about the "root metaphor" of HRM. People management issues were referred to as a "strategic" resource that in the words of the J&J chairman could provide "the edge

in a competitive environment", and BP chairman, "a return to profitability (...) will be achieved through successful teamwork".

This emphasis on a close fit between corporate strategy and organisational/functional HRM strategies[84] is a defining feature of normative prescriptions of HRM and necessitates the creation of an organisation-specific knowledge base about costs and benefits of HRM policy and practice (Mueller, 1998: 155). However, consistent with earlier research, change agents within the two cases were unable to articulate a direct link between business results and the construction of flatter team-based organisations, (Purcell, 1999; Mueller, 1998; Industrial Relations Review and Report, 1994).

Change agents explained that they were required to make choices about HRM in the absence of "objective" measures of the benefits of "One Team" or "CFM". They talked of an "act of faith" that these changes would improve employee and ultimately organisational performance but the need to explain and legitimise change strategies in rational terms (table 6.4). Attempts to generate sufficient funding and support for change at corporate and business levels thus rested on the use of rhetorical language that helped create and sustain a myth of procedural rationality embedded in an "accounting logic" (Armstrong, 1995) upon which business strategies were based. This logic embodied the vocabulary, phrases and expressions indicative of the "engineering discourse" that signified traditional cultural values within the two cases but was an important element of the emergent functional text of HRM and which threatened to eclipse the alternative text concerned with personal growth and autonomy.

As competition within the Health and Oil industries sharpened, corporate leaders placed increasing pressures on local managers to provide data that could be used to evaluate the costs and benefits of the organisational change initiatives. This influence led to an increasing concern amongst members of the Core/CFM implementation teams to

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[84] Dyer (1985) distinguishes between different levels of strategy, and makes a useful distinction between organisational HR strategies and functional HR strategies. The former are those parts of the larger corporate, business or functional strategies akin to Purcell's (1995) higher order strategies; the latter functional strategies are narrower and relate to the strategic management of the HR function at divisional or departmental level.

develop more functional and control centred HR policies, within management regimes that were becoming more overtly concerned with values of cost control rather than investment in human resources. Managers responsible for consolidating changes introduced under CFM/One Team talked of a lack of commitment to " follow through" with the change effort, evidenced by switching of key change leaders onto other projects that assumed a higher profile. It reflected the re-assertion of the accountancy logic noted above, and dominance of the functional text and discursive practices concerned with improving the "bottom line".

The extent to which supporters of the alternate constructive text could alter this dynamic depended on a complex mix of socio-political relations internal and external to the firm. At BPGR for example, at the close of fieldwork, dominance of the functional text was being challenged as the concept of "Social Partnership" emerged to influence inter-textual relations, rooted in "initiative" conversations that were setting in motion a fresh set of meanings and new strategies for change (Ford and Ford, 1995).

Culture of "enterprise" and wider socio-economic changes

Participants' accounts provided a rich insight into the fragmented nature of culture within the two case organisations, and how sensemaking processes were bound up with the exercise of power and politics as different groups fought to assert their own definition of corporate and organisational realities.

This dynamic was inextricably linked with the "culture of enterprise" inscribed in new government initiatives (table 6.4) that advanced ideas about the "sovereignty of the customer" and the development of employee empowerment (du Gay and Salaman, 1998). The launching of the Government's Investors in People (IIP) standard for example created an important unifying theme and symbolic framework for the development of HRM strategies within businesses. At Ethicon for example, one personnel manager described the company's application for the award of IIP as central to the later development of an HRM mission statement that articulated a new vision of work relations within the plant, in which managers were exhorted to;

> " Develop employees with the skills necessary to meet the strategic needs of the customer".

The production and introduction of new recruitment techniques or "technologies" of power (du Gay and Salaman, 1998) funded by local Government, reinforced this re-visioning of the workplace, coupled with a "loose" labour market that allowed the organisation to be highly selective in its recruitment of staff at that time. Moreover heightened competition within the industry provided a convenient backdrop against which change instigators could place responsibility on employees as well as management for the success of the business.

Sensemaking processes amongst organisation participants at BPGR were similarly embedded in larger social-political structures, including changes in government policy and reduction in power of trade unions in the Oil Industry and the wider economy. Changes in political, economic and legal structures spawned during the Thatcher administration provided an important backdrop within which union de-recognition strategy could be legitimised and a culture of "enterprise" developed. While the removal of Margaret Thatcher from office in November 1990 generated talk of a "post-enterprise culture", the language of "the market" and "the individual" continued to dominate discursive practices embedded in social, political and business institutions during the early to mid-1990s (du Gay and Salaman, 1998).

Change leaders at BPGR were conscious however of a rival discourse of "social partnership" created by the then opposition Labour Party at this time and were careful to take advantage while they could of the supremacy of the language of enterprise. Conscious that BPGR was perceived by the public as the "last bastion of trade unionism in the UK", it was considered important that single status terms and conditions were introduced in a climate when trade unions were perceived to be weak or unimportant. Indeed focus group interviews indicated a shared perception amongst production workers, that despite high trade union density within the plant, their unions' bargaining position was weaker than in the past.

These sentiments were reinforced by the relative ease by which BP Oil appeared to remove bargaining rights at its Grangemouth plant before the launching of "One Team", and paved the way for the creation of a new image of the organisation. Two years on

into the change process, talk of "social partnership" became more prominent in the media and wider socio-political environment, and was reflected in fresh attempts amongst change leaders to institutionalise the constructive language of One Team in day-to-day operating *norms* and HRM *practices*.

These findings reveal the nexus between the creation and re-creation of discourse and the inner/outer organisational contexts, and point to the need for further research into this dialectical relationship.

6.4 Contribution of thesis

A central argument underpinning this study is that much of the prescriptive management literature presents too deterministic and narrow view of strategic change and HRM. A growing number of case studies have shown that the assumption of a tight coupling of business and HR strategies underpinning prescriptions of HRM is unrealistic and that a "process-centred view describing a less orderly world" is more adequate (Mueller, 1998: 155).

The case study evidence reported here sheds further light on this debate. Its key contribution is both theoretical and substantive. At a theoretical level it presents a framework that offers an alternative way of viewing the facticity of HRM than that typically portrayed in traditional HRM texts. It was noted in chapter three (page 75) that this is treated as a lens that draws attention to ways of conceptualising and talking about HRM rather than an abstract representation of the phenomenon.

Importantly, the framework invites the reader to eschew modernist dualisms that dominate talk of HRM in the management literature, for example between rhetoric and reality and between hard and soft. While I might be criticised for replacing one set of dualisms with another, through the introduction of constructive/functional texts, I have presented these as mutually implicated. Highlighting this mutual dependence allows analysts to make sense of the paradoxical nature of HRM in a way that otherwise remains invisible to modernists who try to produce singular definitions of HRM and who treat hard and soft practices as separate concrete entities.

The "reality" of HRM that such analysts claim to see and/or experience fails to address the socially contested nature of HRM – the complex discursive processes by which people construct and reconstruct their understandings of HRM-based change, of the kind examined in this study. Both the theoretical framework and case study evidence sensitises the reader to such issues. Constructive and functional texts and practices are shown to merge within the two cases to form an HRM discourse that was in a constant "state of play" depending upon a changing organisational context. To collapse the discourse into either hard or soft texts for individual analysis would thus be to destroy the integrity (completeness) of HRM, since they can only be explained and understood in relation to one another. This is exemplified by ways in which the mixing of metaphors such as "team" and "market" provided an important means of combining the two rival texts at BP and Ethicon. This helped to bring into play ideas that had meanings within different realities, notably an understanding that a concern with personal growth and employee involvement would result in greater organisational efficiency.

The above arguments complement Keenoy's recent polemic about the nature of "HRMism" (Keenoy, 1999). He calls for an alternative ontological research position to that of the modernist in order to allow for the analytical significance of "the mutually implicated processes of discursive construction and social accomplishment" that constitute HRMism (page 17). Linked with this is the need for empirical work that acknowledges the reflexive and constitutive nature of the research process itself and that is sensitive to the role of discourse in the social creation of realities but which "evades the limitless relativism found in some varieties of social constructionism"(page 18). This present study presents empirical work that exemplifies these concerns and issues.

Taking a reflexive approach to research means avoiding prematurely applying concepts to emerging case material and maintaining an open attitude that Alvesson and Deetz describe as a "local/emergent research orientation" (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 114). The discourse-analytic and multi-disciplinary approach adopted in this present study facilitated such openness. Access to (and active engagement within) a variety of competing discourses and theoretical perspectives encouraged a reflexive approach and development of a theoretical framework that is well grounded in rich descriptions of the processes by which the language

and practice of HRM emerged and developed within the two cases. At a more practical level both cases highlighted the need for researchers and consultants/managers, seeking to understand processes of HRM-based change, to be aware of the centrality of discourse to organisational life. Developing such awareness has four key implications.

Firstly, conclusions about the relationship between constructive and functional texts reflect what Watson and Rosborough describe as a fundamental tension between the "principle of *employer control of* labour and the principle of *free labour* – which is equally centrally a principle of industrial capitalism" (Watson and Rosborough, 2000: 166). They explain that the practical implication of this is that managers have to manage tensions between humanist and economic concerns rather than overcome them.

Intervention strategies that lead to a clearer appreciation of this dynamic amongst change leaders and more junior managers, would assist in the development of their understanding of the multifaceted nature of HRM discourse, and ways of coping with the basic tensions between competing texts/practices. Research in this area would also help reveal more about the pivotal position of operational managers in the linking of strategic, managerial and operational conversations of change. While growing attention is being given to the role of operational managers in the "delivery" of HRM more could be understood about how this group makes sense of the tensions and conflicts inherent in HRM-based change (Cunningham and Hyman., 1995, 1999; Denham et al., 1997; Storey, 1992; Watson, 1994; Fenton-O'Creevy and Nicholson, 1994). Current research into the role of management continues to favour a view that "the distinction between rhetoric and reality needs to be taken into account in conceptualisation of human resource management" (Truss et al., 1997: 53). This fails to provide sufficient in-depth analysis of how discursive formations (or "bundles" of HRM practices) are enacted by operational managers as part of a strategic change effort nor how these are enabled and constrained by the economic, social and political context of the firm.

Fruitful research in this area could focus upon generating "real-time" and longitudinal descriptive data on managers' personal experiences of change and perceptions of their efforts to "deliver" HRM initiatives to the shopfloor. Thick descriptions of this kind

could reveal further insights into how and why operational managers resist and/or engage in the language of HRM and the impact of this on the formulation and implementation of HRM-based change initiatives.

A second set of practical issues arising from this research is related to the relationship between the dynamics of change within the firm and wider political and corporate discourses. The study suggests that on planning for change, managers could become more aware of the embeddedness of local discourse with wider discursive practices. On so doing, they could develop change intervention strategies that are more sensitive to the enabling and constraining features of this dynamic. Managerial workshops could be devised of the kind described by Musson and Cohen (1999) who explain that they can be designed to illustrate how dominant discourses are acted out in specific organisations and how this influences organisational realities. An understanding of language processes is regarded by them as a "neglected skill in the management curriculum" (1999: 27). They are aware however that interventions, which raise critical awareness of language amongst managers, can be "appropriated by those with the power, resources and money" (Fairclough, 1992: 240, cited by Musson and Cohen, 1999:40). Musson and Cohen defend themselves by saying that; "we are trying to follow Fairclough's advice to raise critical language awareness "in pursuit of change from below" (p239) by offering these courses to more junior levels of management" (p40).

In relation to the above issue, the conceptual frame presented in this thesis sensitises the analyst to the power effect of HRM; its capacity to provide a medium through which dominant groups can authenticate a preferred reality. This sensitivity could contribute towards more critical research and management development activities that question the assumptions underlying current recipes for HRM-based change. It could facilitate more reflective management and academic practice that take account of the potentially ominous nature of HRM-based language and "technologies" adopted by change leaders in their attempt to privilege certain themes and issues over others.

A third set of interrelated research/consultancy applications relates to the heterogeneity of discourse exemplified in this study. Research findings indicated that processes of

homogenisation are constantly open to challenge because of the lines of tension created by competing texts, leading to a complex mix of multiple meanings; mix of resistance and accommodation, conflict and corporation. While discourse analysis revealed the pivotal position of the change leader's position in framing the constructed reality of others, control over meaning construction was shown to be more fragile than that traditionally portrayed by critical theorists . This suggests the need for a more critical treatment of the fluidity of discourse and of employee perceptions and experience of HRM-based change.

This study highlighted the role of "upward influence" consistent with a systemic view of power (Hardy, 1994) upon conversations of change, and the impact of this dynamic upon management decisions and activities. These processes were investigated through an analysis of managerial accounts of change, and to a lesser extent through direct evidence given by participants on the shop floor. An obvious route for further research would be to provide a more sophisticated treatment of employee perceptions/ experience of and resistance to, HRM-based change than the traditional attitude survey generally allows.

Finally, the above observations offer practical insights into the question of culture change and resonate with increasing interest expressed by academics about the complex nature and viability of such initiatives (Oswick et al., 1997; Rosenthal et al., 1998; Sharpe, 1997; Harris and Ogbonna, 1998). Achieving unity of meaning across different levels of conversation was difficult given the variety of competing sub-cultures and diversity of interests between the ranks of manager as well as between managers and their subordinates. The picture of change to emerge within the two cases, was one of a constantly shifting constellation of meanings.

These findings highlight the need for alternate intervention strategies that take more account of competing "world views" and underscore the potential of cultural intervention strategies that attempt to diagnose the change situation in terms of competing realities. These could highlight the significance of more open and fluid dialogue between managers and subordinates of the kind noted by Weick and Quinn

(1999) and explained in chapter two (page 26). They point to the benefits of developing collaborative inquiry processes in which effort is made to open up dialogue across different "world views", and which facilitate the questioning of assumptions and constructions of new meanings and the building of trust between different levels of managers, and between managers and employees.

6.4.1 Summary

A key point that can been drawn from the above discussion is that HRM practices are unique to the individual firm depending upon its context. One cannot simply quantify the number of practices as suggested by Storey's scoring system (1992), or cluster them using some form of statistical analysis (Wood and de Menzies, 1998; Guest, 1999a,b; Hoque, 1999), and make assumptions about the nature and/or effects of changes in management practice. A significant problem with positivist research of this nature is that focus is placed on content/structural issues and less on processes by which HRM practices are developed. This present study has shown that such processes are emergent and socially complex, focussing upon the heterogeneity and changeability of HRM discourse and the impact of this upon the emergence and development of HRM practices.

Case examples provided rich illustrations of ways in which the discourse of HRM was mobilised by change leaders, serving to construct "preferred readings" of the discourse. They also showed that such consensus was only temporary and open to continual change as different texts overlapped and competed. These findings are consistent with Cohen and Musson's (2000) recent analysis of the enterprise discourse and how individuals working in small business environments have articulated it. They conclude that people are not passively constituted by particular discourses controlled by dominant players but skilfully appropriate new concepts providing them with opportunities to manoeuvre and negotiate their own understandings within their own particular worlds. This is not to say that individuals are free agents to construct their realities independently but are confined by structures internal and external to the firm and notions of what is and is not acceptable or "real" within particular contexts.

The conceptual framework presented in figure 6.2 provides a useful lens for further research concerned with describing and explaining how different readings of HRM reflect and constitute individual interpretations amongst managers at different levels of decision making and their subordinates at the "receiving end" of HRM. This would generate more understanding about processes of sensemaking and ways in which these influence the emergence of HRM initiatives, the extent to which they are perceived as integrated, and how they are appropriated and used by organisation participants to meet a variety of ends.

Appendix One

Four research paradigms: Burrel and Morgan (1979)

Interpretive	A subjectivist view is taken of the social world that is concerned with explaining the nature of social order and equilibrium. Research is oriented towards understanding interpretive schemes and patterns of shared meaning. It avoids questions of conflict and coercion in social structures, and is therefore implicitly committed to the sociology of regulation.
Functionalist	An objectivist view is taken of the social world that is rooted in the sociology of regulation. Research is concerned with searching for regularities and causal relationships. It carries an implicit orientation towards a managerialist perspective and maintenance of the status quo.
Radical humanist	Typified by the subjectivist view, this perspective adopts an orientation towards radically changing *constructed* realities. Research is concerned with the domination of humans by ideological super structures in which he/she interacts, and the alienation arising from this.
Radical structuralist	Characterised by the objectivist view, this perspective advocates a radical change in *structural* realities. Research concentrates upon structural conflict, modes of domination, contradiction and deprivation.

Appendix two

Storey's Model of HRM : The twenty five item checklist (1995 : 10)

Dimension	Personnel and IR	HRM
	Beliefs and assumptions	
1 contract	careful delineation of written contracts	aim to "go beyond" contract
2 rules	importance of devising clear rules / mutuality	"can do" outlook; impatience with "rule"
3 guide to management action	procedures / consistency and control	"business need" / flexibility / commitment
4 behaviour referent	norms / customs and practice	values / mission
5 managerial task vis-a vis labour	monitoring	Nurturing
6 nature of relations	pluralist	Unitarist
7 conflict	institutionalised	de-emphasised
8 standardisation	high (eg parity an issue)	low (eg parity not seen as relevant)
	Strategic aspects	
9 key relations	labour - management	business – customer
10 initiatives	piecemeal	Integrated
11 corporate plan	marginal to	central to
12 speed of decisions	slow	Fast
	Line management	
13 management role	transactional	transforming leadership
14 key managers	personnel / IR specialists	general / business / line managers
15 prized management skills	negotiation	Facilitation
	Key levers	
16 foci for attention for interventions	personnel procedures	wide-ranging cultural, structural and personnel strategies
17 selection	separate, marginal task	integrated, key task
18 pay	job evaluation ; multiple fixed grades	performance related : few if any grades
19 conditions	separately negotiated	Harmonisation
20 labour management	collective bargaining contracts	towards individual contracts
21 thrust of relations with stewards	regularised through facilities and training	marginalised (with exception of some bargaining for change models)
22 communication	restricted flow / indirect	increased flow / direct
23 job design	division of labour	Teamwork
24 conflict handling	reach temporary truces	manage climate and culture
25 training and development	controlled access to courses	learning companies

Appendix three

Coding scheme

Antecedents of change and evolution of HRM:	**DEGN**

• Existing organisational structure, role of personnel function and personnel practices
• Perceived threats/opportunities (external & internal)
  • economic/legal context
  • corporate strategy and strategic importance of operating unit
  • competitive position of operating unit within local market
  • power and role of trade unions
  • exposure to new manufacturing techniques/ external discourses (corporate/consultants/government)
• Rationale for change & perceived benefits of teamworking amongst change agents
• Challenging "Old Order" and structuring definitions & expectations
  • generating dissatisfaction with current ways of doing things; dismantling artefacts that symbolise prevailing paradigm
  • overt political tactics (rewards, threats, coalition building)
  • articulation of a vision of the future
  • use of political language to generate shared understandings & shape perceptions of threats and opportunities
  • Use of rational language to frame the nature and scale of change and to defining objectives and measures of effectiveness
• Developing transition management structures : task forces & appointment of internal change agents ; appointment of consultants/OD specialists
• Key players and role of HR function
• Development of action strategies and the forming of HR systems (discursive practices) that signal the beginning of change & a new symbolic order (reward, relations, recruitment, training and development, & organisational structures)
• Level of consensus amongst different stakeholder groups on the rationale and benefits of change; definition of problems, change objectives and strategies for action.
• Work organisation in transition
  • Role of line : perceptions/level of support/management style
  • Employee perceptions/ level of support
	ANT: STR / HRROLE/ PSYS
	CONTEXT:
	ECON
	CSTRAT
	MK
	COMP
	TU
	SOURCE:
	CORP/CON/GOV
	VISION:OBJ/BEN
	
	LEGIT:
	RSTR
	
	POL
	VIS
	METAPHOR/
	TEAM/ MK/SSS
	PLAN/ROLE
	OBJ/
	MEAS
	PROCESS:
	• TASK/PLAY / CON
	
	PLAY/HRROLE
	HRM:
	PLAN/T&D/APP/R&S/REW/STR
	
	ALIGN:
	VIS/OBJ/BEN
	
	PRAC:
	LINE/ROLE/ATT
	EATT

Transformation of HRM
 	
• Experimentation of new working practices; generation of "success stories" or "quick wins"
• Role of HRM in support of change; use of metaphor; emergence of manpower plans, formalisation of HR strategies & implementation of transitional HR practices .
 	
• Change agents/key players
• Development of transition plans and the articulation of role behaviours & standards of performance.
• Articulation of a working model of teamworking
• Work organisation in transition
  • Role of line : perceptions/level of support/management style
  • Employee perceptions/ level of support
• External context
  • economic/legal context
  • corporate strategy and strategic importance of operating unit
  • competitive position of operating unit within local market
  • power and role of trade unions
• exposure to new manufacturing techniques/ external discourses (corporate/consultants/government)
	TRANS
	
	PRAC:
	ORG/ WIN
	HRM:
	PLAN/T&D/APP/R&S/REW/STR
	METAPHOR:
	TEAM/ MK/SSS
	PLAY
	PLAN/ROLE
	
	MODEL
	
	PRAC:
	LINE/ROLE/ATT
	
	CONTEXT:
	ECON
	CSTRAT
	MK
	COMP
	TU
	SOURCE:
	CORP/CON/GOV

Incorporation of HRM
 	
• Formal introduction of new working practices : "start up date".
• Key players/Appointment of "local" change agents
• Development of "local" implementation plans/Practices
• Introduction of formal evaluation procedures, and monitoring of outcomes at "local" and "site" levels.
• Structuring perceptions of the change process
  ◊ the organisational processes of change
  ◊ the outcomes of change
• Signalling the irreversibility of change: Role of HRM in consolidating change; use of metaphor, formalisation of HR strategies & implementation of HR practices .
 	
• Work organisation in transition
  • Role of line : perceptions/level of support/management style
  • Employee perceptions/ level of support
• External context
  • economic/legal context
  • corporate strategy and strategic importance of operating unit
  • competitive position of operating unit within local market
  • power and role of trade unions
  • exposure to new manufacturing techniques/ external discourses (corporate/consultants/government)
	INST
	
	START
	PLAY:LPLAY
	LPLAN/WIN
	MON/OUT
	
	DEFINE:
	DEGN
	OUT
	SYMB
	HRM:T&D/APP/R&S/REW/STR
	METAPHOR:
	TEAM/ MK/SSS
	PRAC:
	LINE/STYLE/ATT
	EATT
	CONTEXT:
	ECON
	CSTRAT
	MK
	COMP
	TU
	SOURCE:
	CORP/CON/GOV

Appendix Four
Ethicon Case Study: Sample Display - phase two of change

Respondents	Transition Phase : April 1991 - March 1993
Directors	
Operations Director	**Consultants** *(APL) cited as playing a key role in helping change agents develop a broader understanding of CFM* and "spreading the word throughout the company of the strategic importance of cell working" (p5, 50). Noted how APL raised awareness of the concept of continuous improvement - soon followed by decision at SG that " it was appropriate that it was time that the Catgut Cell be considering the concept of continuous improvement" (Meeting 27 August 1992, B46) **Org Survey (April 1992): Joint directors briefings** drew upon market and team metaphors, giving a high profile to nation-wide UK Customer Satisfaction survey and the need to respond more quickly to customer needs. CFM a "major company policy..our survival depends on it". .."Our customers and our competitors are forcing Ethicon Ltd to act swiftly as a world-class relay team and to adopt our new strategy of cell team working". *(B27)* ***Discourse of hard HRM:*** *explains that there is now greater recognition of* the "strategic importance" of CFM amongst managers (Refer to B's memo : " CFM is perhaps one of the most important strategic initiatives that we as an organisation have been involved in. To date it has generally been viewed as an Operational issue, but the opportunities and implications of CFM are, in fact, much wider. CFM is an *organisational* issue" (April '92, B34)**Time out:** Cell development came to a halt whilst demand was high (p4, 40) " During 1993, demand was significantly over forecast, and the invest meant in training required to take key people out of normal manufacturing was not feasible" (p4, 37).
Personnel Director	**Trans MS :** C pressed for the involvement of HR staff in proposed implementation of three further cells. HR staff began to gain more influence as increasing unrest broke out amongst cell operators over payment issue (4/12/91, A1). Transitional structures for CFM discussed (5 cells) & problem of "schizophrenic manager" noted by steering group (B46, 27/8/92). **Discourse:** language of "soft" and "hard" HRM signalled importance of change & HR issues; language of "competitive advantage", "customer satisfaction" , "survival" and "team" = key themes underpinning Directors briefings held in March and April 1992. These were followed by *CFM Cells - People Strategy"* prepared by C for board of directors - recognised " serious employee relations problems" & the critical importance of HRM to the development of shared understandings about the concept of CFM- outlined a new mix of HR systems that could symbolise new behaviours required for " a culture change " that would result in a " flexible, mobile, cellular workforce of world class calibre" (B22, p 11) **Time out (1993)** While some of the principles of teamworking , in particular training and development, had been accepted as requiring more management attention, the need for a change in "recipe" or dominant management philosophy remained. **Recruitment:** 400 new recruits been through SRI and potentially team players ; **"soft" language of teamworking** becoming more evident as SG referred to notion of " team training" & the need to develop "team player attitudes" (A1) Comments about current **accounting system** used as an illustration (p3, 14; 5, 32). A new system was required " which frees up people that are caught up in conventional accountancy techniques, allowing them to be more proactive and not just keeping score on what variances have occurred" (p6, 38).Training & Dev: C suggested to steering group that catgut cell be seen as a "test bed for future HRD" - finance director responded that this would result in a loss of productivity and negative variances (B46 Minutes 27/8/92). **Pay:** Referred to lack of understanding associated with current bonus system- urgently required to simplify incentive arrangements (p4, 26) – made difficult because of different personnel/line perspectives (see Steering group minutes)

Appendix Four
Ethicon Case Study: Sample Display - phase two of change

Company Secretary	**Managerial fatigue** Recognised that changes introduced in recent years had a particular life span . "We will say that we have now transferred around 100% of our manufacturing employees to cellular manufacture, which is great, but I am not convinced that the wheel hasn't been taken of the accelerator a bit because we think that we have done it..You don't have people in those cells that can do absolutely everything. They are actually working in smaller departments as opposed to cells, and that is a problem.. winders are still winders, and attachers are attachers and so on" (p5,51). **Discourse:** Felt that "soft" language of HRM masked continuance of traditional management controls. "Cells are effectively mini-departments, although there is the language of teamworking now. People have team leaders now and rather than saying that you are the winding department, it is " You are now the prolene team" (p7, 72).
Senior M'gers	
Operations Manager	**Pay :** New pay system introduced in Sept 1991. During individual interviews with P and cell operators, concerns were expressed that there was little encouragement for "high achievers" to continue to produce top level performance [1], and operators would require " more ownership of the cell" if it was to work (memo from P, Sep 1991, A6) Productivity amongst top earners fell & led to setting up of remunerations sub committee (2 engrs + compens. manager): reaffirmed management support for cell bonus, but led to alteration in March 1993 of weightings to reflect 5% lead time, 80% output and 15% (C9) Stressed the need to change reward system to something that is both fair and understood by operators. Not an easy task because of "inbred attitudes" related to a traditional incentive scheme geared towards gaining high output . (p4, 24; **Time out:** European scene became main driver for CFM , but also a hindrance because of the unprecedented levels of demand. This led to "time out" for any further cell development during 1993. (p2,6)
Head of Resourcing	**Proposed structure of cells** Meeting of personnel staff, SRI rep. and line mgt. : Outline of future structure of cells B8, Feb 1992). **Pay :** debate continued to highlight differences in line/HR values & the need to reach agreement about "How far do we want to take the concept of self managing teams?" - meaning of empowerment in constant negotiation (B72, Oct 1992) New payment system discussed with cell operators on an individual basis; highlighted concern at relatively small incentive pay and a lack of empowerment (A6) **Training:** Insufficient training of team leaders to date: argued that the operational responsibility for employee empowerment rested with team leaders "handicapped by long service and unable to "let go" of their managerial prerogative" (S1, p3, 15) Most had been promoted because of technical competence, rather than because of their leadership skills. Production pressures & pay (1993): C strongly opposed to suggestions by B to return to indiv. incentives given a fall in cell performance (25/2/93, C5) - led to forming of remunerations sub group (March 1993 C 7-17) & subsequent alteration of weightings to reflect 5% lead time, 80% output and 15% (C9) - followed by *CFM strategy document* (3/93, B8) : criticised by C for lack of detail re HRP (22/3, C15). **Recruitment :** recruited 350 people to cope with ^ production; SRI testing introduced soft language of teamworking (p2, 4), " allowed us to bring people in with team potential" ; Recruitment notices reflected new language (17/2/92, B 12) Screening procedures resulted in a success rate of only 8 applicants per 100 and not considered to " add much value to the recruitment process" . (p12, 101)**Time out (March 1993)** 38% now in cells, but further progress was " stalled while operations are under pressure to get the product out the door.. people recruited to become team players, but not able to develop this potential". (p2) **Managerial fatigue/Unstable leadership:** B moved onto European Logistic Project & this " added further to slump in CFM progress. It led to a vacuum in leadership for several mths" (p9, 51).Wide differences in perceptions of CFM /TW remained between HR and the line " who are very production rather than people oriented" (p9, 51). **Appraisal:** No appraisal procedures for **1100** direct incentive operators. Situation under review (p11, 88)
Head of Employee Development	**T&Dev :** Cells had to date not received any training in team building skills & these were felt to be critical to cell development. Key challenge was to be able to alter manager's views about the contribution of T&D to business success . "Currently managers view training as a cost rather than an investment, and at the moment we are suffering from the age old problem that when production demands are high HRM issues are put on the back

1 As a result of the changes, twenty four cell operators were better off, whilst eight (class A attachers) were worst off

Appendix Four
Ethicon Case Study: Sample Display - phase two of change

	burner"(Dec 1993, p4) Keen to encourage devolution of personnel responsibilities (for example coaching in new skills) to team leaders and operator level, and stressed the need for sufficient time out to develop these people. (p2) **Politics** "Personnel staff need to be more proactive".. G gained influence amongst line colleagues through gaining membership of various committees & "learning about the business side of things". Became a member of CFM strategy group 6 mths following her appointment within Ethicon (X2, p5, 53) **Pay :** (1993): Strongly opposed to B's measures to combat negative variances by recommending move back to individual incentives (Feb 1993) - emphasised the need to maintain HR practices that " support the tenets of CFM" (25 Feb 1993, C4) **Accounting system:** needed to change " to take account of indirect work, such as time out for team development" (p7, 12).
Sales Manager	**External influences: 1993** More cost conscious NHS trusts "looking for a 24 hour service and quick and efficient assistance. They too, are cutting back on stock levels and this has resulted in some instances where sales reps. have had to run round a number of their distributors in order to meet customer demands on time (p2,8)
CFM Project Manager	**Structuring meaning** (April 1992) Memo from B noting 1/2 day *CFM awareness seminars* for managers, led consultant : " to date CFM has generally been viewed as an operational issue, but the implications are in fact much wider..it is an *organisational* issue." (B34) **Pay and struggle for consensus:** 1991 Continual disagreement over pay - B articulated the "philosophy of CFM"; used as basis of cost benefit analysis (4/3/91; A41, 15 & 16) statement reflected in new pay policy : single job rate within cell. plus group bonus ((A16). *1993 "CFM Strategy Document"* (C8 March 1993 : prepared by B with the help of APL) : sets out a " vision of what our manufacturing organisation will look like...". **Recruitment into new cells framed by soft language of HRM** (1992): article for Quality First "Ethicon Helps pioneer new "Super Teams"; referred to new selection procedures are part of a consortium research project with DTI and Motorola; "so far we have been using SRI technique to recruit new employees into Ethicon. Soon we will be using this technique to identify operators strengths, then establish well balanced teams (CFM cells) from our existing employees". (B55) 1994 - Dowie voiced support in the use of SRI, although had reservations about high level of rejects amongst applicants. Noted that SRI test was simply a recruitment tool, not used to develop any particular mix of teams. (p7, 63-67, p8,71) **Production pressures & manufacturing variances:** (9/2/93, C4) Dominance of hard language of HRM : B noted problems with manufacturing variances & proposed return to individual incentives, a halt to secondary skills & CFM awareness training. Led to fierce debate with HR staff - followed by CFM Strategy document that "details vision of the future" for CFM over next 5 yrs (3/93 B8).
Middle M'gers	
Manager, Management Development	**External influences & development of HRM :** Noted influence of IIP in raising importance of T&D. "Even things like company strategy, vision etc lived in draws until a relatively short period of time ago. I would say they lived in drawers until investors in people. S3: p5, 54)". **Recruitment:** Cell preference sheets introduced for internal applicants re working with products, & training colleagues (p 1, 6) - see briefing notice 1/5/92 (B35) Lasted only a few months as demand for Prolene grew. K trained in SRI techniques that signalled a whole new approach to recruitment. Operators very anxious about new procedures & SRI testing of internal applicants stopped 8 mths after intro. (p2, 14)
Junior M'gers	
Cell Group Leader	**CFM awareness/ dominance of hard HRM :** Few cell members had received CFM training although team leaders were trained to do this; prime reason was insufficient time owing to pressures for high demand (11, 135/140; p12, 146-162)**Performance indices (absence)** Informal local manufacturing procedures for calculating absence on a cell by cell basis (carried out by Colin.) - such information .."is not really communicated back to the team" (p8, 92) Simple aggregate figures calculated for each cell - no comparisons against traditional areas, or between shifts . (p18, 243) Considered that better absence is one benefit likely and to be looked for in a cell. (p17, 232) **Accounting system:** Need to change accounting system p12, 158) Colin keen to delegate certain clerical duties , but this was very limited because such work would be regarded as a "negative variance" (p18, 239)

Appendix Four
Ethicon Case Study: Sample Display - phase two of change

Manager, Staff Training	**Trans_MS: consultants** brought in to facilitate introduction of JIT. "They played an important role in shaping people's understanding of TW" . One day "CFM awareness seminars" held early 1992, for managers and support staff, extended to cell team leaders later that year.Training sessions included a "JIT game" that " was useful in getting the message of empowerment across " (p 2, 14) TL's trained to instruct operators in JIT game, but little evidence of this because of difficulty in allowing cell workers time off. ((p2,12/14; p3,20; p5,33) **Discourse:** state of play between hard and soft language shifted as consultants worked closely with HR staff, & presented ideas about "linking business and people requirements strategically, employee development and communication". ("What should HR be doing as a group to support CFM" B52). Also helped compile job descriptions for Team Leader & Team Member (B38). **Recruitment:** Disappointed at limited use of SRI test in identifying mix of team members. (p4,30) Pay : Referred to pay issues arising from frustration amongst traditional operators that winders in cells now 2 job grades higher, were not rotating to more skilled jobs- reflected highly instrumental approach to work (p5,37)
Manager, Comp. & Benefits	**Pay and creation of multiple meanings** : Aug 1991 new payment system introduced: all cell operators paid single job rate, together with group incentive based on quality, lead time and output. Meant that 24 were better off, whilst 8 (class A attachers) would be worst off (A26, A16). The latter were central to production process and their disruption potential became more evident as productivity within the pilot cell fell. Noted use of "Open Line" as a way of expressing a collective voice. (p3, 25-26). **Mixed signals:** new pay system led to great confusion and less operator control over earnings and a fall in productivity amongst "high fliers" (p4,28; p5,31; p10, 74) Led to the establishment of a remuneration methods sub group formed on 10 March 1993. Written documentation reflected wide differences in opinion between line and personnel (see C7, C9, C10, C17) - led to interim arrangements where weightings of group incentive pay were altered to emphasise output (C9)
Manager of Operations Training	**Recruitment :** S stressed that she did not know enough about the nature of SRI to discuss the applicability of SRI test results for T&D purposes. *Nevertheless considered that "we are not using it to its full potential to develop teams" as she was led to believe it was to do at a seminar on the subject. (p4, 39/42; p5, 45)* ***Training & development:*** *Training period for new operators approx. 16 weeks.*Nature of training described (p217; p3,27/28) Operator training had been audited 4 times in the past 5 months, and S pointed to a set of standardised training procedures. (2 internal and 2 external audits) Standards set by ISO90001, and Good Manu. Practice,(amongst others) (p5, 51) S would like to see all cell members going on a teambuilding exercise. Only Tls had received such training (p5, 55) **Cell working in practice:** Raised the issue of capability amongst long serving employees who were unable to undertake more skilled work. Noted also, that management had raised expectations that they would be unable to meet and production arrangements in certain cells where potential for multi-skilling was limited- in Prolene cell operators were restricted to only two process skills (attacghing and winding)(p (p4, 32-33) **Performance indicators:** Noted that the 3 months review for new starts was like a mini-appraisal, and that given time she would ideally change the criteria for assessment - but did not specify how. Found difficulty suggesting how team performance might be monitored rather than simply individual performance measures. Measures related to attendance and quality were noted. (p2, 17-25)

Appendix Four
Ethicon Case Study: Sample Display - phase two of change

Manager, Recr't & Selection	**Recruitment:** February 1992, SRI provided an interviewing and analysis programme - use of SRI Services Perceiver which explored 8 themes relevant to successful performance in manufacturing roles- reflected the soft language of HRM (B 1 - see B4 for details of themes) Oct '92, SRI procedures introduced for recruitment into Prolene and Vicryl Relay and Micro Resin cells formed during October 1992, with the " aim to proceed in using the SRI information to create well balanced teams" (SG Minutes 9 November 1992; B 73). M felt that better use could be made of the SRI mechanism in order to identify and plan the right mix of team members displaying the themes against which recruits are tested.(p2, 15) Written information SRI results was forwarded to ops T&D dept, but did not seem to be passed on to the line once trainee entered cell (p8, 71/73) In practice M continued to place emphasis on "traditional interview" as a selection device(p4, 33). Overall total no. of jobs increased by approx. 350 due to European Harmonisation, thus temporary employees on successful completion of training were expecting to gain perm positions. (B50) Line managers generated the paperwork for vacancies, and were responsible for updating job description. An updated "Team member description" was provided. Key results areas included output, quality, continuous improvement, flexibility, training others, health and safety. "Soft " issues relating to teamwork were not included. (p3, 24, p4, 29-33) **Vision of CFM:** "New recruitment procedures help raise a clearer picture of TW - new language of team building & problem solving". (B 12, 17 Feb 1992).
Shop Floor	
Team Leaders (Focus Group: 3)	**CFM Awareness :** sessions helped "build a picture of CFM and my expectations were very high" Expectation was that TL's be given responsibility to develop multi-skilled teams, & that operators would learn some clerical / supervisory duties, and become self sufficient. p1, 5-8: p2, 13, 15: p7, 85: p13, 167) Training for TL's regarded as insufficient : felt that the longer serving supervisors were likely to have difficulty moving away from a traditional (autocratic) style to a more participative approach (see quotes p14, 187-195).**Time out:** Stressed push for high volume of products; " They got their forecast wrong! "Led to "time out" for CFM development, which meant that we had to keep operators on direct work" (p14,186) **Pay:** Complicated pay system little understood by operators and team leaders. No longer able to calculate bonuses due to the team (p4, 46/50) Cells comprise of 2 or 3 night shifts, each shift working independently, but paid as if one team - see quote (p18, 242) **Recruitment and state of play between hard and soft HRM:** One TL been trained as SRI tester, but because of pressures for high demand during 1993 had not been involved for over a year. Considered that SRI could be used as a tool for developing right mix of teams - nevertheless in the absence of job descriptions SRI was useful as "we now know what we are looking for". (p18, 240).**CFM in practice**: Nature of supervision influenced by team leaders experience and opinions about the benefits of teamworking, as well as constraints related to push for high productivity and **costing procedures.** (p6, 64/78 : p8, 88;) Greater variability would be evident if "we had a freer reign" (p14, 189/192) At present supervisory control was "fairly tight". TL "unable to expand operator responsibilities in the area of clerical work as hoped (P7, 80). Because of high demand, "it is easy to keep people at the skill they are best at" (p3, 28). No policy on job rotation, but TL's stated that there "is some evidence of teamwork, as girls help one another out from time to time" (p13, 168)Leading hands were now assuming more responsibility given that supervisors were now responsible for more people (three shift groups) (p15, 198-212). Noted issue of operator capability; older workers unable to do attaching work and in Prolene cell, which meant they were restricted to attaching work (only two process skills required in this cell)(p 4,32)
Leading Hands (Focus Group 3)	**CFM Awareness sessions** helped TL's develop understanding of JIT and heightened their expectations of cell working at Ethicon. (p12, 159- 167) *More training was needed in helping them "learn how to make the transitions from supervisor to facilitator" (p14, 194) No requirement for operators to attend CFM awareness session. Few cell members had received training although team leaders were able to do this; prime reason = pressures for high demand* (11, 135/140; p12, 146-162) **Fragmented meanings:** Poor role definitions and confusion about how to manage operators in cells. Made life difficult as leading hands effectively acted as team leader for their shift (cell TL was responsible fro three shifts) (p3, 38048) **Accounting system:** Frustrated at the constraints placed by system that focuses on the need to keep operators on direct work- leaves little leeway for getting workers to do extra jobs such as filling in requisitions - little or no opportunity to develop teams (p7, 128)

Appendix Five

Johnson and Johnson Credo Statement

Our Credo

We believe our first responsibility is to the doctors, nurses and patients,
to mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services.
In meeting their needs everything we do must be of high quality.
We must constantly strive to reduce costs
in order to maintain reasonable prices.
Customers orders must be serviced promptly and accurately.
Our suppliers and distributors must have an opportunity
to make a fair profit.
and advancement for those qualified
We must provide competent management,
and their actions must be just and ethical.
We are responsible to our employees,
the men and women who work with us throughout the world.
Everyone must be considered as an individual.
We must respect their dignity and recognise their merit.
They must have a sense of security in their jobs.
Compensation must be fair and adequate,
and working conditions clean, orderly and safe.
We must be mindful of ways to help our employees fulfil
their family responsibilities.
Employees must feel free to make suggestions and complaints.
There must be equal opportunity for employment, development
and advancement for those qualified.
We must provide competent management,
and their actions must be just and ethical.

We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work
and to the world community as well.
We must be good citizens - support good works and charities
and bear our fair share of taxes.
We must encourage civic improvements and better health and education.
We must maintain in good order
the property we are privileged to use,
Protecting the environment and natural resources

Our final responsibility is to our stockholders.
Business must make a sound profit.
We must experiment with new ideas.
Research must be carried on, innovative programmes developed
and new products launched.
Reserves must be created to provide for adverse times.
When we operate according to these principles.
the stockholders should realise a fair return.
Johnson & Johnson

TEAM MEMBER JOB DESCRIPTION

Overall Objective

To meet the required performance levels of quality, flexibility and output standards of that particular team.

Key Result Areas	Standards of Performance
1. OUTPUT	Ensure that departmental targets are achieved on an ongoing basis.
2. QUALITY	Personal responsibility for checking standards of work is to the quality standard required for that particular operation.
3. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	To constantly suggest ways of improving the process.
4. FLEXIBILITY	Flexibility will be achieved when you obtain the required level of proficiency in your primary skill plus 2* others (including parallel testing). * Dependent upon individual cell requirements.
5. TRAINING	To have the ability and proficiency to train others in your primary skill (to parallel testing level).
6. HEALTH & SAFETY	Maintaining through familiarity, your detailed personal Health & Safety responsibilities as described in Ethicon Limited's Health & Safety Policy.

TEAM LEADER JOB DESCRIPTION

Overall Objective

To achieve results through the direct efforts of the team.

Key Result Areas	Standards of Performance
1. LEAD TIME	To achieve the targeted lead times agreed in the production schedule.
2. QUALITY	To achieve zero defects leaving the Cell.
3. FLEXIBILITY	Ensure each job in the Cell is adequately covered taking accounts of absence, sickness and holidays. Provide the necessary training to achieve the required flexibility. To facilitate and ensure that the necessary resources are made available to achieve the desired flexibility.
4. PLANNING	To meet the daily/weekly production schedule. Ensure that the necessary resources (Methods, Materials, Manpower, Money and Machinery, ie the 5 M's) are made available. To sequence within the production schedule.
5. HEALTH & SAFETY	Maintaining through familiarity, your detailed personal Health & Safety responsibilities as described in Ethicon Limited's Health & Safety Policy.

Local Issue Teams Terms of Reference

Listed below are the framework terms of reference for the local issue teams. These will be discussed and agreed with the relevant Manufacturing Manager/ Area Manager.

1. Develop the Self Directed Team concept and role of the technician to meet the needs of the local area.

2. Follow the initial outline plan set by the "Core Team" breaking the task down into:-

   Core Technical Knowledge
   Additional Flexibility
   Teamworking Skills
   Supporting Roles

3. Ensure that all staff within the relevant area remain fully briefed and involved in the process.

4. Provide regular feedback on progress to the "Core Team" and the Manufacturing/ Area Manager.

5. Ensure that this process builds constructively on previous changes achieved through Benchmarking/Organisational Review.

6. Identify the training requirements for the fully Self Directed Teams, Technicians and Supporting Roles.

7. Network with the "Core Team" to share best practice across the site and seek guidance where necessary.

8. Network with the other local teams within the area.

Generic Guidance

As a way forward on the definition of self directed teams and the technician concept, the team should break the subject down into the following sections

(a) Core Technical Knowledge.
(b) Additional Flexibility
(c) Teamworking Skills
(d) Supporting Roles

Each of these areas should be considered in line with the enclosed timetable.

Core Technical Knowledge

It is envisaged that the technicians will deepen their understanding of the principles behind the units/equipment being operated. This will enhance their ability to fault find, optimise operations and identify potential problems before they fully develop. Possible examples of where deeper technical knowledge has been identified are:-

For Manufacturing Teams:-

- Distillation
- Reactor operation & Control
- Feed Pre-treatment
- Control schemes
- Procedures

For Maintenance Support Teams:-

- Improved knowledge of PLC's, DCS and Control schemes.
- Piping specs & PID's
- Development/Updating of procedures

For Manufacturing Support Teams:-

- Improved Knowledge of Teroman materials system
- Improved shutdown materials management
- Improved knowledge of material specifications
- Operation of Form & Fill bagging machine
- Interfacing with polyethylene database & CS systems
- Operation of Polyethylene Gate house

You should consider each of these topics in the following format:-

What deeper knowledge is required?
Who currently has this knowledge?
Who should have the knowledge in the future?
What are the constraints to this process?

Consideration should be given to the knowledge required by the teams in your local area.

Additional Flexibility

These will be activities from other core areas and will broaden the technicians overall abilities.

Examples of these activities are:-

For Manufacturing Teams:-

- Gauge Glass overhaul.
- Blower Routines.
- Calibration of selected Instruments
- Set up & stroking of control valves
- Increased electrical isolation capability

Appendix seven

Local Issue Teams Terms of Reference

For Maintenance Support Teams:-

- Further development of cross craft skills.
- Updating of technical data i.e. Teroman Tech data
- Basic manufacturing training.

For Manufacturing Support Teams:-

- Stock checking
- Stock control / replenishment of satellite stores
- First line maintenance of conveyors & machinery
- Routine & preventative maintenance
- Planning & Scheduling of Hauliers

You should consider each of these topics in the following format:-
What are the possible activities?
How and who completes these activities at present?
Who should do them in the future?
What are the constraints to this process?

Teamworking skills

With the development of self directed technician teams it will be necessary to develop "New team skills".

Examples of these types of skills are given below:-

- Planning, Co-ordinating & pre-engineering
- Plant development
- Assessment
- Training & Coaching
- Problem solving
- HSE issues
- Goal setting
- Team leader skills

Again you should look at these topics in the following manner
Identify main skills.
How and who completes these activities at present?
Who should do them in the future?
What constraints stop this happening?

Supporting Roles

In working through the areas of Core technical knowledge, Additional Flexibility's and Teamworking, it is apparent the technician role will both broaden and deepen. Consideration must be given to the new supporting roles that will be necessary to aid the technician team in meeting it's goals. Areas for consideration are:-

- Training / Assessment
- Co-ordination of team activities

Also consider how the technician teams will interface to:-

- Day based maintenance team
- Day based manufacturing teams
- Shift management

Manufacturing Engineer (Process)

The prime role of the Manufacturing Engineer (Process) is to ensure that good communications are maintained between the shift teams and the day support teams. This is NOT a line management role. The Manufacturing Engineer (Process) will be a member of the Manufacturing Engineering Team.

The Manufacturing Engineer (Process) will:-

- Develop greater involvement in areas currently covered by Manufacturing or Support Engineers (troubleshooting, plant trials, PPM development etc.)
- Shutdown preparation & planning
- Agree short term plans (including maintenance) with the shift teams and day support team
- Agree medium term (weekly onwards) plans with the Manufacturing Engineer (Maintenance) with input from the Team Leaders
- Ensure all materials are available to meet the production requirement (catalyst, chemicals etc.)
- Organise plant preparation and permits to meet maintenance program
- Liaise with Projects, Production Planning, external contractors
- Provide a Procedure update plan
- Carry out a Work request review to schedule appropriate maintenance work for the shift teams
- Provide an audit function in areas such as Permit to Work Audits to ensure that Site Standards are maintained
- Schedule COP and Statutory Inspections within the Production Plan
- Act as Technical reference point for the shift teams. Identify equipment problems that require input from the Manufacturing Engineers
- Co-ordinate the Manufacturing activities associated with plant shutdowns
- Potential member of Technician/Team Leader staff appraisal panels.
- Co-ordinate new team member selection
- Arrange long term sickness cover for the shift teams
- Liaise with the Manufacturing Engineer (Training) to ensure that Technicians are released to meet training program

Manufacturing Engineer (Maintenance)

The prime role of the Manufacturing Engineer (Maintenance) is to ensure that all engineering activity is executed in a methodical manner and that appropriate men, materials and services are available. They will facilitate the development of the Self Directed Team and Technician concepts in the local area. This is NOT a line management role. The Manufacturing Engineer (Maintenance) will be members of the Manufacturing Engineering Team or Engineering Support Team.

The Manufacturing Engineer (Maintenance) will:-

- Develop greater involvement in areas currently covered by Manufacturing or Support Engineers (troubleshooting, PPM development etc.)
- Shutdown preparation & planning
- Agree engineering and maintenance plans and schedules (weekly onwards) with the Manufacturing Engineer (Process) with input from the Team Leaders
- Ensure that all engineering and maintenance tasks are thoroughly pre-engineered and properly scheduled
- Provide purchasing support for the Teams
- Ensure that support services have been organised for larger set- piece activities
- Ensure that COP and Statutory inspections are scheduled within the Maintenance plan
- Act as Technical reference point for the Teams. Identify engineering problems that require input from the other Manufacturing or Support Engineers
- Facilitate the provision of the relevant engineering standards, procedures and practices
- Prepare detailed job procedures to aid the Manufacturing and Maintenance Technicians
- Ensure that competent engineering resources are available for the scheduled program
- Assist Team Leader in identifying training needs of Technicians
- Potential member of Technician/Team Leader staff appraisal panels
- Carry out training & assessment of Maintenance Technicians to Site Standards
- Co-ordinate new team member selection
- Liaise with the Manufacturing Engineer (Training) to ensure that Technicians are released to meet training program

New Manufacturing Team Leader Role

The Team Leader will be an integral working member of the team. The team will not have a formal 'deputy' role. The Shift Co-ordinator will provide the appropriate support for the Team through the transition phase. Thereafter local management shall endorse individuals with sufficient competence to cover for the Team Leader in key areas. Ultimately the team should have more than one individual fully competent in the Team Leader role.

Operations

Emergency Response

- Overall local co-ordination of team
- Crisis management

Planning & co-ordinating

- Contribute to daily planning process via attendance at daily co-ordination meeting and input to medium term plans. Allocate work across the team

Team Briefing

- Brief team on a regular basis (Information note etc.), collect feedback and lead workgroups

People

Training & Assessment

- Help identify and define team development / training needs
- Responsible for coaching / developing team members

Appraisal

- Facilitate team appraisal process

Team Work

- Ability to facilitate resolution of conflict within the team
- Initiator of disciplinary system, if required

Cover Arrangements

- Overall co-ordination across all shifts

ONE TEAM

Information

Handover

- Team handover of area status
- Key point of contact for team

Night Order book

- Write appropriate sections of the NOB with assis. ·e of Manufacturing Engineering Team

Costs

IPM's / KPI's / Optimisation

- Monitor, report and control appropriate indicators / measurements

New Manufacturing Technician Role

Operations

Operating Tasks

- **Fully competent in appropriate underpinning knowledge and locally defined workplace assessments. Utilises underpinning knowledge to solve simple problems**
- Utilise underpinning knowledge to solve complex problems within the area
- Overall control / Optimisation of area via DCS or equivalent. Capable of contributing to problem solving in aspects that have an impact out with the local area
- Fully competent in appropriate work place assessments in another team, within the same area (if applicable)
  or
- Fully competent in appropriate work place assessments in another team out with the area (if applicable)

Planning & co-ordinating

- **Contribute to and implement local co-ordination plan (24 hours)**
  Input into medium term plans

Maintenance Skills

- **Simple pipework, rigging, I/E skills, as defined by the local area**
- Utilise underpinning knowledge to solve complex problems within the area
- Recognised expert within the team. Coach train & assess others

Product Quality

- **Simple Lab skills defined by local area. First line maintenance capability with "On-line" Analysers. Take corrective action on simple quality control aspects as defined by local area**
- Monitor, control and take corrective action on complex / overall product quality aspects

HSE Tasks

- **Knowledge & compliance of statutory requirements (COSHH, PPE, HSAWA, Manual Handling regs). Participate in Planned Inspections, Task Observations, Housekeeping, etc.**
- Active role in raising TLC reports and PPE inspection
- HSE Management activities. Appropriate TLC investigation & co-ordination of Planned Inspections, Task Observations, etc.

Plant Development

- **Contribute to team review of PPM's. Develop ideas for PPM's for Manufacturing Engineering team to implement**
- Write simple PPM's for Manufacturing Engineering Team to Approve

Control of Work

- **Control & monitor work within plant area**
- Responsible for issuing Permits to Work and Plant Release certificates

People

Training & Assessment

- **Progress through personal training & development plan to meet agreed targets**
- Train Team / Colleague in specific workplace assessments to site standards
- Assess team members in specific workplace assessments to site standards

Appraisal

- **Complete personal self appraisal & input constructively to other team members as nominated. Input to objective setting process**

Cover Arrangements

- **Fulfil team responsibilities for managing cover arrangements within the local framework**

Manpower Planning

- Once self directed team is developed, contribute to the selection of new team members / team leaders

Information

Handover

- **Individual handover of job status**

Night Order book

- **Follow guidance provided and contribute to content of NOB**

Procedures

- **Review within area to an agreed schedule**
- Capable of writing for Manufacturing Engineer to approve

Costs

Team Budget Control

- **Contribute to team budget preparation and control**
- Monitor and report on a team budget

IPM's / KPI's / Optimisation

- **Understand & contribute to achieving plant targets**

New Maintenance Technician Role

Operations

Operating Tasks

- **Fully competent in appropriate underpinning knowledge and locally defined work place assessments. Utilises underpinning knowledge to solve simple problems**
- Utilise underpinning knowledge to solve complex problems within the area
- Fully competent in appropriate work place assessments in another team, within the same area (if applicable)
  or
- Fully competent in appropriate work place assessments in another team out with the area (if applicable)

Planning & co-ordinating

- **Contribute to and implement local co-ordination plan (24 hours). Input into medium term plans**
- Pre-engineering of some routine activities

Flexibility Skills

- **Further cross-skills as defined by the local area**

HSE Tasks

- **Knowledge & compliance of statutory requirements (COSHH, PPE, HSAWA, Manual Handling regs). Participate in Planned Inspections, Task Observations, Housekeeping, etc.**
- Active role in raising TLC reports and PPE inspection
- HSE Management activities. Appropriate TLC investigation & co-ordination of Planned Inspections, Task Observations, etc.

Plant / Area Development

- **Contribute to team review of PPM's, equipment and systems Develop ideas for Manufacturing Engineering / Support teams to implement**
- Write simple PPM's / modifications for Manufacturing Engineering / Support Team to approve

People

Training & Assessment

- **Progress through personal training & development plan to meet agreed targets**
- Train Team / Colleague in specific work place assessments to site standards
- Assess Manufacturing / Support team members in specific work place assessments to site standards

Appraisal

- **Complete personal self appraisal & input constructively to other team members as nominated. Input to objective setting process**

Cover Arrangements

- **Fulfil team responsibilities for managing cover arrangements within the local framework**

Manpower Planning

- Once self directed team is developed, contribute to the selection of new team members / team leaders

Information

Handover

- **Individual handover of job status**

Procedures

- **Review within area to an agreed schedule**
- Capable of writing for Manufacturing / Support Engineer to approve

Costs

Team Budget Control

- **Contribute to team budget preparation and control**
- Monitor and report on a team budget

IPM's / KPI's / Optimisation

- **Understand & contribute to achieving maintenance teams targets**

Shift Co-ordinators

This is not a permanent role. The Shift Co-ordinators will provide a transitionary support role to the Technician Teams as they evolve. They will facilitate the development of the Self Directed Team and Technician concepts in the local area. This is NOT a line management role. The Shift Co-ordinators will be members of the Manufacturing Engineering Team.

The Shift Co-ordinators will:-

- Act as Local Emergency Response Co-ordinator
- Support Team Leader in Crisis Management
- Provide support for Team until competency of team members develops fully
- Train and Assess Technician Teams to agreed targets
- Prepare local training modules
- Provide a Technical reference point for the teams
- Optimise/Co-ordinate across the Group
  - support & develop Team Leaders in Group Wide activities
  - assist Team Leaders in resolving conflicting priorities between teams
- Train Shift Management Team in key local issues

Technician Competency Map Profile

You can use this profile to map yourself against the Competencies

Appendix nine
Technician Competency Map Profile

ACCOUNTABILITIES		1	2	3	4
A1	Plant Operations / Plant Maintenance				
A2	Co-ordination / Planning				
A3	TLC / Safety				
A4	Housekeeping / Planned Inspections				
A5	**EMERGENCY RESPONSE***		*		
A6	Permits				
A7	Plant / Equipment Development				
A8	Quality				
A9	Team IPMs / Objectives				
A10	Team Budgets				
A11	**APPRAISAL & DEVELOPMENT***		*		
A12	**COVER***		*		
A13	**HANDOVERS***		*		
A14	Procedures / Standards				
A15	**PROCUREMENT***		*		
SKILLS		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
B1	Process Operations				
B2	Process Operations Flexibilities				
B3	Engineering Skills				
B4	Fault Diagnosis				
B5	Presentation Skills				
B6	Information Technology				
B7	Training / Instruction				
B8	**MEETINGS***		*		
KNOWLEDGE		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
C1	Understanding Costs				
C2	Plant Knowledge				
C3	Site Knowledge				
BEHAVIOURS		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
D1	**TEAM LEADERSHIP***		*		*
D2	Teamwork & Flexibility				
D3	Innovation				
D4	Initiative				
D5	Customer Service				
D6	Working Standards				
D7	Communication				
D8	Continuous Improvement and Learning				

Mandatory for all disciplines

Maintenance mandatory (craft)

Manufacturing mandatory (process)

Optional must demonstrate a minimum at each level (see grading guide)

* - MANDATORY FOR TEAMLEADERS

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